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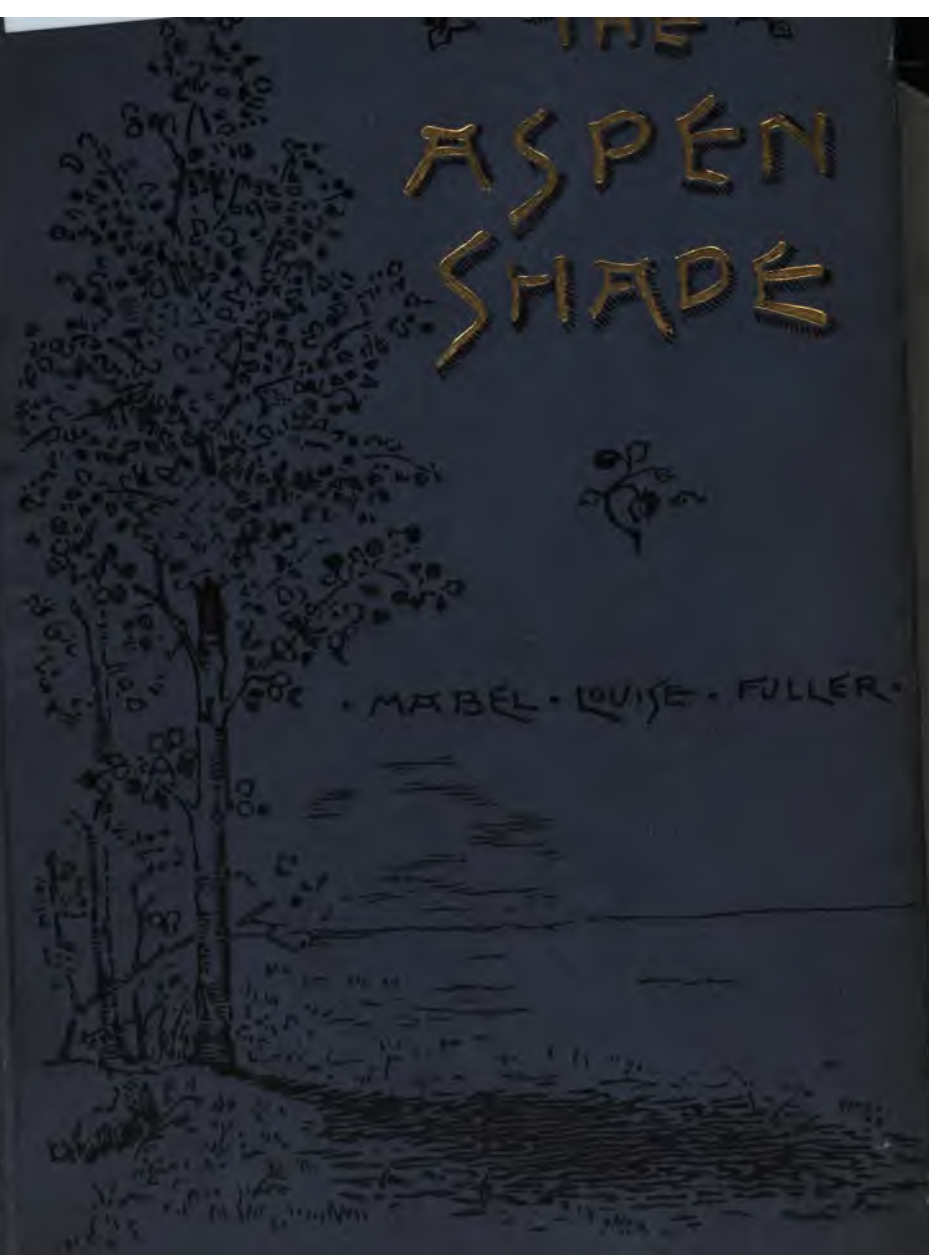
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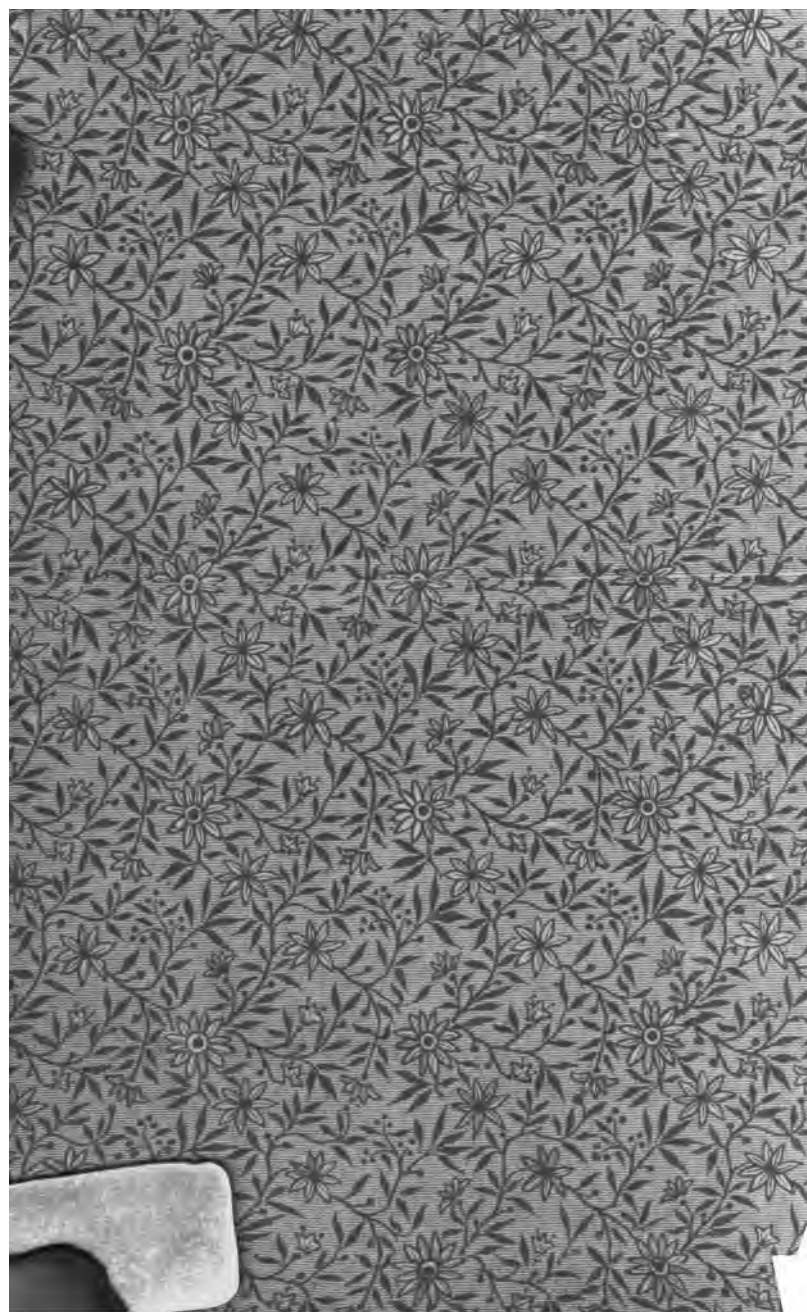
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THE
ASPEN
SHADE

MABEL LOUISE FULLER







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THE ASPEN SHADE



THE ASPEN SHADE

A Romance

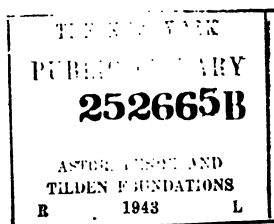
BY
MABEL LOUISE FULLER

"O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!" — MARMION.

BOSTON
DE WOLFE, FISKE & CO.

1889

ETR



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C. J. PETERS & SON,
TYPOGRAPHERS AND ELECTROTYPERS,
146 HIGH STREET, BOSTON.

TO
My dear Father and Mother,
WITH
MANY LOVING REMEMBRANCES,
This Book
IS DEDICATED.



*“ From out of the eastern gray
Of a new-born day,
They took a strand;
And they bound the silver line
With a ray of the sun's decline;
And they wove them well in a loom,
The threads of hope and of doom.”*

CHARLES KNOWLES BOLTON

THE ASPEN SHADE.

CHAPTER I.

SOCIETY, it is popularly supposed, is a paradise, to the extent at least of having an angel with flaming sword to guard its entrance gate. Only this paradise is peopled, and the angel not an inexorable one. Sometimes it is to beauty that his sword is lowered, sometimes to intellect ; occasionally, it must be admitted, it is lowered, and at that somewhat obsequiously, to the shining talisman of riches.

Now Katharine Desmond represented in herself these three things. She was rich, she was beautiful, she was clever ; she had likewise the minor attraction of being young and a widow. She appeared, no one knew how or whence, but

the golden gate swung back on its hinges, the angel stood aside, and the upper ten thousand received her with enthusiasm.

Katharine became the rage. She was invited everywhere. No reception was complete without her, and innumerable were the teas, the lunches, the musicales, and the soirées that she graced. She wore her honors, not meekly, but as if to the manner born; another woman might have been patronized; Katharine could not so have been. She had merely come to her natural place, and it would have taken a very courageous woman, who, meeting the serene gaze of those wonderful gray eyes, could have hinted at any other solution of the problem.

There were envious tongues, of course—even in paradise, but for the nonce they wagged harmlessly enough. She had married for money, said they, a man old enough to be her father. Miss Trecartin, Mrs. Desmond's companion, had caught the rumor. She told Katharine in little, quick, nervous sentences,

as was her way. She was indignant, a little puzzled, a little, only a little, curious.

Katharine did not deny anything ; she disarmed criticism with a smile. Miss Trecartin felt all at once as if she had somehow involved herself in the paltriness of the suspicion by speaking at all on the subject. This was in the first few weeks of their coming to the city ; later, the report had died from lack of fuel or for other cause, and only at rare intervals was mentioned, as perhaps in warning to some fervent but poverty-smitten youth, occupied in burning incense at the shrine of this new divinity.

Katharine had taken rooms in an aristocratic part of the city ; she had them furnished exquisitely and somewhat æsthetically, and she now entertained her friends there with uniform success.

In one of these she was sitting, the dark-toned blue of her chair throwing into relief the pure whiteness of her face. The firelight flickered vaguely, bringing out unexpected lights in the piled-up masses of her gold-bronze hair.

Katharine was thinking. She held between her fingers an invitation to Mrs. Winthrop Grant's "at home." She had received it a little cynically—a little amusedly. It represented the seal of the elect; it was her passport back again, signed, countersigned, and ratified. This was the thing for which her husband had toiled and intrigued, only intrigue, she reflected, had been a little out of his line, suggesting dimly the gambols of an elephant. He was not here to see it. The taste of liberty was in her mouth, its intoxication in her heart and brain; but she was still not a little sorry. She was grateful to him; and now, no regret could bring him back. He was beyond social triumphs, beyond money-making, beyond possession of her, Katharine. She shivered a little, though the room was warm. When youth has been brought face to face with Death, the grim look of his sightless eyes is not so soon to be forgotten.

But these were dreary reflections enough, and meanwhile, here was the invitation. Miss

Trecartin had come in noiselessly. She was standing now before the mantel and eying it with palpable dissatisfaction. She, in fact, had never yet entered the room without bestowing upon its picturesque disorder a look of disapproval.

"Why, there is not a pair of anything," she had said to Katharine, but Mrs. Desmond had only laughed merrily. She had seen the New England arrangement of ornament, and the sight had not appealed at all strongly to her fancy. Now she held up the note for Miss Trecartin's inspection.

"What do you think of this, Janet?" she said. Miss Trecartin took it reverentially.

"For you, Katharine?" she asked.

"So it would seem."

A faint flush came into the elder lady's sal-low cheeks. She folded one hand tightly over the other in a sort of mild rapture.

"But you will meet everybody — everybody, Katharine," she said ecstatically.

"If I go," supplemented Katharine de-

murely. "It seems almost too much like a pomp and vanity. Is it a pomp and vanity, Janet?"

"It is a providence," Miss Trecartin said solemnly.

"And what if I do not avail myself of the chance?"

"Not avail yourself? But you don't mean it, Katharine." Undeveloped powers of strategy, latent in Miss Trecartin's stern New England bosom, came to her aid. "And Paul Remington is to be there," she added.

"True, I had forgotten that. And you really wish me to go, Janet?"

"I shall be very much disappointed if you do not."

"Answered admirably. My dear, it shall be exactly as you say. Don't let me forget that I — sacrifice myself for your pleasure. If the colonel could but see me, Janet. Am I not heavenly in disposition?"

Katharine threw her arms around Miss Trecartin's neck. Her companion was moved.

She did not altogether approve of Katharine, but she could not help loving her. Katharine, she felt, was unregenerate, but —

“Say it,” urged Katharine winningly.

“You are very good indeed, in some ways,” Miss Trecartin said slowly; “and very good to me always,” the stern lines on her faded face softening pathetically.

“Don’t,” said Katharine quickly; “I am not good; I don’t want to be. I am trading on your sympathy, Janet; but I do like you, and that is true.” She stopped abruptly. “Sometimes I wish that I had your conscience and your rigid conservative way of looking at things. Your principles and practice agree. You don’t care about the emptiness of life, and you do care about sober, sensible things, and — Mrs. Winthrop Grant’s invitation. To think of your having a weakness, Janet, and one from which I am free! It is incredible. But you had better come with me while I decide on the gown.” She went to the mirror and pushed up the soft fluffy hair from off her forehead.

“Item, a tall figure,” she said aloud, “item, hair brown, golden, red, — according to the speaker; item, gray, no, green eyes — which is it, Janet? — gray eyes, Grecian nose. Why is it that I was given Madonna-like features? Still petrified, Janet? You have no idea how delightful you make yourself. If I cannot have a sensation on my own account, I can at least be always sure of giving you one; and there is even a second-rate feeling of virtue in seeing you depressed at my wickedness. You save me at will from complete intellectual ruin. Am I not beautiful, Janet?”

Miss Trecartin was mystified. She had been Mrs. Desmond’s companion for more than two years, but Katharine’s flights of fancy were still beyond her. She had an uneasy feeling that her affection for Katharine was unlawful. Katharine, she felt dimly conscious, ignored, when she was not amused by, her own rigid New England principles; but who knew but what she might be reformed? The thought was balm to Miss Trecartin’s troubled conscience.

If only that argument would stay uppermost. Conversation with the future penitent was so apt to disturb her views and — but meanwhile, there was Katharine waiting for an answer.

“You have certainly had your share of good looks,” she said, truthfully, in reply to Mrs. Desmond’s question, “but you should remember that you owe it not to your own devices, but rather —”

“To the cosmetics and powders of an advanced age. Ah! Janet, I did not think it of you. Your remark, I would observe, is in reality unfounded. If my maid told you differently she is not to be believed. No, don’t apologize. I am a Christian — I consequently forgive you. But about my gown for the reception. Let me think. The colonel would have wanted red and yellow, but the colonel is dead. There are compensations in all things, Janet. Come, let us look at my dresses.”

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Miss Trecartin had spoken of Paul Remington's coming as a reason for Katharine's acceptance of Mrs. Grant's invitation, she had, as the phrase goes, "builded better than she knew." Katharine had heard a great deal about the young Englishman, and what she heard had both piqued and interested her. As for Remington, the meeting had for him also a certain element of interest. He was conscious indeed of having had it in view when he had promised attendance at the reception. He had heard Katharine spoken of admiringly, flippantly, disapprovingly, reverentially. He was prepared for disappointment, but there was the chance, too, of being pleased. He did not expect very much, being fully aware of the facility for exaggeration which rumor possesses. He had certain conservative ideas about women which he seldom,

if ever, realized. He had chosen his friends among them more from force of circumstances than from any love for his ideal. He had indeed a slight tinge of contempt mingled with his devotion to the sex. He was, in fact, essentially a man who made certain reservations in this attitude of devotion. Women, he assumed, —and he judged them necessarily from those whom he knew — women were certain subordinate creatures made for man's entertainment, and sometimes, but rarely, for his consolation. They were delicate creatures and must be treated as such. Their ruling passion was love of admiration and in some the love of power; they should be gratified in the first instance to any extent, in the second to a reasonable degree. They were all impulsive, given to insincerity, lacking in moral force, with sympathy for their highest function. Remington was, in reality, that strange compound, a man of the world, the world being that of the nineteenth century; somewhat Byronic in his conclusions, yet far from Byronic in the carrying

out of his ideas ; a man taking things as they came, not expecting too much from human nature, whether in himself or in his friends, with a certain sort of cynical good humor, the result partly of education, partly of temperament, and partly of the time ; a man popular in his club, liked, if a little feared, by his dependants, admired by women, with courage, manliness, and generosity for virtues, and no particular vices, but with a latent fund of undeveloped passion that his many love affairs had not as yet had power to rouse.

Katharine had heard of him. Miss Trecartin noticed the hour added to the usual time for Mrs. Desmond's toilet, but she regarded it as an independent fact, not as an inevitable feminine result.

Remington, coming a little late, found the room pretty well filled. He made his way to Mrs. Winthrop Grant, recognizing, as he passed, an occasional familiar face. His hostess received him with effusion. He was, in fact, a very old friend.

"So you have come at last, Paul," she said, holding out her hand. "It is very good of you. I see some people here that you know already, but there are several also that you must be sure to meet, — Herr Von Schoenoffer, for instance, and young Mrs. Desmond."

"So she is present," said Paul. He stepped back and surveyed the room. He was trying to decide which of the pretty women that he did not know could be Katharine.

"You here?" said a voice beside him. Remington turned and recognized its possessor. "Grafton?" he said, interrogatively. The two men shook hands.

"Commend me to an afternoon reception for meeting every one you know," said Paul.

"And every one you don't," assented Grafton. He had a quick little way of answering, a sort of chirp, that contrasted oddly with Remington's low, deep tones and rather lazy way of talking. He held his head habitually a little to one side.

"That's what I come for, meet the lions, hear 'em roar. Only one lion to-night, Herr Schoenoffer, but a pretty big lioness."

He smiled appreciatively at his own joke.

"Met her?" he asked.

"If you mean Mrs. Desmond, unfortunately no."

Grafton stared.

"You can't have been here long," he said.

"Only a week or thereabouts."

"Very pretty woman, talks well — must introduce you. There's Miss Biddleford smiling this way; just come into a fortune through her grandmother. See you later in the evening," and he hurried away in that direction. Remington, turning, encountered his hostess.

"I wish people would try not to look quite so helpless," she began. "Now see those two women. They have actually been in one spot for the last twenty minutes. They ought to converse — be animated."

"Perhaps they are strangers here," Paul suggested.

"Well, so is Mrs. Desmond. But you haven't met her, have you?"

"Not yet, although I have, I can tell you, been

suffering acutely with the desire of doing so. I hear her name on all sides. She seems to have won even little Grafton's approval. So you are going to take pity on me? Thanks!"

He followed his hostess through the different groups, pausing now and then to greet some old friend. Presently they reached Katharine. Remington, looking down, beheld a very beautiful woman; Katharine, looking up, a very handsome man, with that latent air of strength about him so fascinating to the average female mind. Women admire nothing so much as power.

"Mr. Remington has just come from abroad," said their hostess, "and Mrs. Desmond is to winter in Paris, so you have both the halo of foreign travel upon you."

"And are numbered among the elect," said Paul. "Do you find it an agreeable sensation, Mrs. Desmond?"

"It has certainly the charm of novelty," said Katharine. Remington sat down beside her. The group of men that had before been talking to her seemed somehow to melt away.

"Do you know," she went on, "that, humiliating as it is to confess it, I cannot still bring myself to the proper degree of indifference with regard to my journey, and in these days when every one travels it is hardly the thing to be so enthusiastic. Why, the very sight of a steamer trunk thrills me with delightful anticipation."

"You ought to feel proud," said Remington, "not humiliated."

"Then you sympathize with my state of mind, in which case you must also comprehend it. There is Herr Schoenoffer. Have you met him?"

"Not as yet. Have you?"

"Unhappily, yes; and spent a very trying quarter of an hour in his company. I was rapidly becoming convinced that the whole social structure was tottering, and just about to fall, when Mrs. Grant rescued me. She must have seen my expression of hopeless misery. Don't you think so?"

"It is very probable. She is an old friend of mine, so I can vouch at least for her kind-heartedness. Witness my own presence here."

Katharine laughed.

"I find the proof convincing," she said; "but about these other people. Do you know many here?"

"Only a few. Tell me something about them, Mrs. Desmond."

Katharine shook her head.

"I have thought of something better," she said. "I will listen while you tell me."

"But you must remember that they are all, or nearly all, total strangers to me."

"Hence my request. First impressions, you know, count for so much. I am naturally anxious to have the benefit of yours. Why are you smiling?"

"I was merely thinking that you must have great confidence in me. I shall be as it were blindfold. I may attack, without knowing it, your dearest friends, and altogether lacerate your tenderest feelings."

Katharine laughed. She would have been but half a woman if Remington's manner had failed to please her.

"In that case I offer you full pardon beforehand," she said. "What, for instance, can you say about that young man opposite?"

"She has a very quiet but determined way of getting what she wants," thought Paul of Katharine, "and a certain expectation of your doing what she tells you. But that may be forgiven in a beautiful woman, and she is beautiful."

"Well," said Katharine, with the least touch of impatience.

Remington fixed his brown eyes inquiringly upon her.

"I have forgotten which young man you propose to victimize," he said calmly.

Katharine could not help smiling. "The one talking to the young lady in blue."

Remington regarded him leisurely.

"He has a certain air, has he not, Mrs. Desmond?" he asked. "He impresses me at least in that way, as if he were cultivating it assiduously. What the air is, I have not quite decided. Is he posing for anything in particular?—a poet, now, or an artist of the Burne-Jones period?"

"Neither, as far as I know. But as you say he has a certain individuality which we will call an 'air of distinction.' Now the young lady in blue."

"The young lady in blue," said Paul confidently, "is at present so taken up with the young man with the 'air of distinction' as to have entirely lost her own personality. And the dowager in black — Shall I take them in order, Mrs. Desmond? Well, the dowager in black is distinctly and unmistakably unhappy. She has looked this way at least fifteen times in the last few minutes. Is there anything in this direction to worry her? And the thin man, apparently altogether in her power, is not a genius, though he thinks he is so."

"There you are wrong," said Katharine.
"He has genius — of a certain kind."

"Then you know him," said Remington, "and probably the rest of these people as well. What did I tell you, Mrs. Desmond? Confess now, isn't a good deal your own fault?"

Katharine smiled provokingly.

"Now, be fair with me; do you know them?"

"Intimately."

"But they are not—don't bring utter despair upon me,—they are not all your dearest friends?"

"But they are," said Katharine, "quite my dearest friends."

They both laughed.

"After that you need expect nothing more from me of an analytical character," said Remington in an aggrieved tone.

"But I cannot so easily forego a pleasure. You have, I perceive, great powers of perception."

"Nothing can move me, neither irony."

"Not irony, believe me."

"Well, then, neither flattery, bribery, nor threats, though you are very good to tell me that the magic spectacles have fallen to my share. Did you never hear about them? No? Then shall I tell you the story?"

"If you will be so kind," said Katharine.

"How long is Remington going to monopolize the Desmond?" asked one vapid young man of another in an injured tone.

"You'll have to get accustomed to it. Can't be avoided. No use trying to outshine Remington. Confoundedly cool stare of his, too. Ever noticed it?"

"And the number of pretty girls waiting for him, lucky dog."

"These same girls won't love her any the more for it, old fellow." Whereat they indulge in the laughter peculiar to callow youth.

"Once upon a time," began Remington, in the orthodox way of all true story-tellers, "there was a royal christening, and the invited fairies came with gifts. They all gave something — one success, another wealth, another beauty, and so on, until the turn of the last and most powerful of the fairies had come, and she — you are listening, Mrs. Desmond?"

"Most attentively."

"Well, she, the last fairy, who was, beside, the

baby king's own special godmother, she, when her turn came, drew out from her pocket only a pair of very old iron-bound spectacles. You can imagine the surprise and disgust of the court. Of course the queen-mother tried to be polite, and her ladies followed suit, but they could not altogether hide their dissatisfaction. It is possible indeed that had the fairy godmother been not quite so powerful they might possibly have called her mean. But as to the spectacles,—and now, Mrs. Desmond, I come to the pith of the story,—when these spectacles, I say, were fitted on the infant's royal nose, such a look of preternatural wisdom came into his eyes that every one began to feel uncomfortable. The Head Nurse all at once remembered uneasily how she had kissed the tall soldier who met her while wheeling the perambulator; the Most Distant Relative—am I tiring you, Mrs. Desmond?—the Most Distant Relative remembered that the gold cup which he had brought as a present had in reality been only gold-plated, and so on, the Lord High Chancellor thinking of one thing

and the Chief Cook of another, and the strangest thing of all, Mrs. Desmond, was the strong conviction that every one had that this three-weeks-old baby knew every one of those things and was looking through those spectacles into their very inmost heart of hearts."

Katharine flushed a little.

"You are a very terrible person indeed," she said quickly. "If to you has fallen in reality these same magic spectacles, I hope that you occasionally lay them aside."

"I do, occasionally, but sooner or later I put them on. And then, Mrs. Desmond —"

"Stop," said Katharine. "I am sensitive to the moral of your tale. You are making me uncomfortable."

"I hope not; I meant only to make you penitent. You see you were trying, were you not, to get me into trouble? You wanted to embarrass me. Confess it."

Katharine laughed again. "Ask of your magic spectacles," she said.

Mrs. Grant came near them at that moment.

"Is Mr. Remington making himself interesting?" she asked.

"Mr. Remington is trying hard to frighten me," said Katharine.

Paul turned a pair of dark brown eyes upon her. They could be very compelling when they chose. Slowly and a little reluctantly Katharine's gray ones were raised to meet them.

"Mrs. Desmond is going to give me the chance of frightening her again," he said quietly. "Are you not, Mrs. Desmond?"

"And of telling her about foreign travel," said his hostess.

"Yes," said Katharine. She turned to Paul. "You will find me a very different sort of person under my own vine and fig-tree," she said.

"Is that a warning?" asked Remington, with the least touch of amusement.

"We will call it a — suggestion."

Remington bowed. "I will come prepared," he said. He waited while Katharine made her farewells to her hostess and then conducted her to her carriage.

Little Grafton appeared in the doorway. "What, going, Mrs. Desmond?" he chirped. "Haven't had a chance to see you at all; that's hard luck. That's like Remington — Remington all out," he muttered under his breath.

"Till Thursday, then," said Katharine, smiling at Grafton and giving Paul her hand. The carriage rolled away. Remington turned to go in. Grafton walked beside him, taking two little hops to one of Paul's strides. He was bubbling all over with indignation.

"Thursday, indeed!"

"What d' you think of Mrs. Desmond," he asked; "but she isn't going to stay here long — going to go abroad, very short time."

"So she told me," said Paul amused.

Grafton stopped to take breath. He looked after Paul with an air of absorbed interest in his bright little eyes.

"What are you thinking about, Mr. Grafton?" asked Miss Biddleford — she of the two millions left by her grandmother. Grafton

brightened under the inquiry. Miss Biddleford shook her finger at him playfully.

"You wicked man," she said coquettishly. "I know what you are doing. You are thinking of something sarcastic to put in your next society sketch. Oh! I am *so* afraid of you clever men."

"Where beauty goes, wisdom, wisdom," said little Grafton, dazzled by the splendor of his opportunity. Miss Biddleford smiled assuringly. "Wisdom lays down its arms," said Grafton with fervor.

Miss Biddleford looked down at the real thread lace in her sleeves and patted a refractory loop of ribbon into place with an air of intense unconsciousness.

"Let us sit here, a little apart from the busy throng," she said sweetly.

Remington was making preparations for departure.

"Why is it one always goes away from one of your teas with a delightful feeling of satisfaction?" he asked of his hostess.

"Do you mean that you soon get enough of it? I perceive that your flattery is two-edged."

"You misunderstand me," said Paul laughing; "that episode of the two motionless women has evidently upset you. In plain English, then, I have had a delightful afternoon and am coming soon to talk it over with you."

"A misplaced pronoun. Talk *it* over, my dear Paul; talk her over, you mean."

Remington smiled again. "I find you vindictive," he said; "you are likewise trying to embarrass me. I take refuge in flight."

He stood for a moment outside to light a cigarette. Grafton was helping Miss Biddleford into her carriage.

"You wicked, wicked man!" said a feminine voice reproachfully; "oh! you wicked, wicked man."

"Not 't all, assure you," came the answer. Remington walked rapidly away in the direction of his hotel.

Miss Trecartin met Katharine at the foot of

the stairs. She had watched the carriage come and go again, and she therefore knew of Mrs. Desmond's arrival.

"Janet, curiosity is reprehensible," said Katharine gravely. Miss Trecartin was not given to dissimulation.

"Did you enjoy it very much?" she asked, "and were they all there?"

"All."

"And you saw Mrs. Winthrop Grant?"

"Naturally."

Katharine went to the glass to take off her hat. She looked at herself reflectively from all points of view with a prolonged and serious gaze. The effect seemed to please her.

"I am glad that I left the plumes just **where** they were," she said; "the side view is better."

Miss Trecartin waited patiently for further elucidation, but Katharine vouchsafed none.

"What did you do there?" Miss Trecartin asked finally.

Katharine sat down and smoothed the feathers thoughtfully.

"Do?" she said at last, "well, very much the same as at other receptions. I came, saw, and overcame, — at least I am not quite sure of that last statement. Mrs. Grant expressed mild delight at my arrival and then introduced several of her friends. There were already a few there that I knew. The German philosopher, Herr Schoenoffer, talked heresy to me, but I had just come from you, Janet, and I withstood his insidious advances. There was the usual gossip, the inevitable tea; it was, in fact, very much what I had expected."

"And you saw Mr. Remington?"

"Remington? Yes, I saw him."

"And do you like him, Katharine?"

"I am glad that I wore this gown," said Katharine, with no apparent connection.

"You do not like him," said Miss Trecartin with conviction.

"He is very tall," said Katharine dreamily, "and strong. I am sure he is very strong. That little Mr. Grafton looks ridiculously sub-

dued and weak beside him. He is coming on one of my Thursdays."

"Why did you ask him if you think him ridiculous?"

"Ridiculous? Who?—Oh! I mean Mr. Remington."

Katharine rose with the same preoccupied air and went slowly upstairs. Miss Trecartin followed her with thoughtful steps.

CHAPTER III.

REMINGTON, returning to his hotel, found a telegram waiting for him. It was from his solicitor, and requested instructions with regard to the disposal of some real estate. Paul lit a cigar and smoked reflectively ; a note lay on the table beside the telegram. He read it over twice slowly. It was an invitation to spend the shooting season with an old friend in Virginia.

An hour ago Remington would have written an immediate acceptance ; now he was trying to persuade himself that business called him abroad. Throughout his meditations floated a tall, sun-crowned figure with a pair of wonderful gray eyes ; and she was going to winter in Paris—not that the fact had any immediate bearing on the subject, only that it was very persistent in remaining uppermost in his mind ;

and as for the real estate — agents were a stupid lot. He knocked off the end of his cigar ash ; he had come to a final determination. He drew pen and paper towards him and wrote, thanking his friend for his kindness and regretting that business cares dictated a refusal. He was going back before long to England. Remington read over the letter with a feeling of satisfaction, the satisfaction coming, doubtless, from duty well done. He finished his cigar presently and went down to dinner.

At about the same time, Mrs. Grant likewise was busily reading a letter. It bore an English post-mark, and the peculiar numbering and inscrutable crossing and recrossing of the pages proclaimed a feminine correspondent.

"I am so glad," the letter ran, "that Paul is staying near you. I think that the trip will do him good and I know that he is in need of some such stimulant. You have heard, of course, about his love affair with that French woman. She married Count Caroni two years ago, and of course Paul has long since forgotten

all about her, but I think that at the time he was pretty deeply affected. At any rate, that or something else has changed him, for he hasn't the least faith in womankind. Women like him, too. I know that he is very much admired here when he stays with us ; but he does puzzle me. Now, you know that he has always liked you, and I hope that you can influence him enough to make him stay some time in your city ; and if you could get him to *talk* to you, I wish that you would try. Although he is my own brother, I don't really dare to question him myself about the Contessa. You know what a way he has of stopping anything of that sort without saying very much himself."

Then followed some messages to mutual friends and an affectionate leave-taking.

Mrs. Grant turned to the postscript : "And above all, my dear Margaret, do not let him suspect that you know anything of that love affair. I saw the Contessa not long ago. She is a decided brunette and is considered beauti-

ful, but it is *beauté du diable*. Gerald says he has sent your husband a case of sherry. I hope that it will reach you safely. Now do write soon and tell me about Paul."

Mrs. Grant was sensitive to outside influences. The letter that she had just received did not surprise her. She had felt vaguely a certain change in Remington's manner, even before an explanation had reached her. The old boyish frankness seemed to have disappeared; there was a discordant note of cynicism. She determined to gain Paul's confidence; she was too wise a woman to try to force it. Her motive was somewhat complex; there was the real wish to help Paul if she might, and, at the same time a delightful feeling that the proximity of romance inspires in most women. A love affair is always singularly interesting.

The bond of friendship that existed between Remington and Mrs. Grant was a good example of the intimacy often connecting a young man and an older married woman. There is perhaps no intimacy exactly like it. It was the good-

fellowship of mutual tastes and perfect understanding. Remington had a solid appreciation and respect for this woman-friend. He believed in her and trusted her. He had often experienced her sound common sense and her never-failing sympathy. He liked to talk over things and people in her company. She, on her side, sincerely liked Paul with a sort of maternal affection that is always present in the best love of the best women. She was not a great deal older than he, in point of years, but a woman matures quicker than a man. She lives more deeply, because if she does not think more than man, she feels more than he does. It is the necessary result of a highly-strung and delicate organization."

Mrs. Grant drew pen and paper towards her and wrote a few lines—an invitation to Remington to dine with her *en famille*. Her husband came in as she was sealing the letter. Mrs. Grant eagerly grasped at the chance it afforded her of saying something of what was on her mind.

"I have just written to Paul Remington," she remarked, "and I have asked him here to dinner on the fifteenth."

"Glad that you did—fine fellow," said her husband, instituting a search for his cigar-case among the *bric-a-brac*.

"And I think Paul is troubled about something," observed Mrs. Grant.

"Indigestion," suggested her husband.

"Winthrop!"

"Well, it can't be money."

"Of course not. He is—at least I think that he is—in fact, Winthrop, Paul is in love."

Winthrop smiled with masculine superiority.

"And you intend managing it all for him?" he suggested.

"What an idea! Of course not. But you won't bring any one else here to dinner, will you, Winthrop?"

"Not if you wish it."

"It's not of the slightest consequence to me," with charming inconsistency, "but I do want to see Paul."

"And you shall, you small match-maker."

Mrs. Grant sighed resignedly. She was too wise to expect appreciation of motive from any man, however sympathetic his relations, still not to be understood and received at her right value. It gave, however, a certain color of self-sacrifice to her design for Remington's welfare. She did not analyze her sensations, but she was conscious of being very well pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

KATHARINE was not given over exclusively to the vice of prolonged meditation and self-examination, but latterly she had somehow been thinking a little about her past life. It was, perhaps, the necessary result of comparison, for she was standing midway between a very real past and what seemed to her now but an unreal and vaporous, if rainbow-tinted, present.

"A very Pandora-box of memories," she had said to Miss Trecartin, and Miss Trecartin had resented the heathenish allusion, while not quite understanding it. "Does any one ever become as thoroughly tired of themselves as I do?" Katharine asked herself; "as Janet says, there is a good deal of vanity about most happiness."

It is a fatality, perhaps, but a very general one, that the past always seems to possess a certain value that the present ever lacks. Katharine,

on looking back to the old days, — the days of starved ambition, deep rebellion against fate, of privation, of struggle, — forgot much of the bitterness and only longed for the tranquillity that she thought must have been hers. If she could but have known it she would have been intensely miserable to have gone back to the old life. Brought up as she had been under the refining and sensitive influence of her mother, the coarse necessities of Western life had always jarred upon her. She inherited, indeed, her father's independence of spirit, but with her mother's love of luxury and comfort. They had been poor, very poor. Report said that she had married for money. Katharine knew it to be true. Sometimes she hated herself for the fact, sometimes she defended it. Colonel Desmond, old and very rich, had fallen in love with her. She had no liking for any one else. Her mother, whom she had loved passionately, was dead ; her father she could not but feel was of coarser clay, a grade lower in the social strata. She admired him for his manliness, for his generosity, for a thousand

and one attributes and qualities, but she did not look to him for sympathy. She loved books, music, refinement, companionship, luxury,—money meant all this and more to her. She had not deceived her husband with the thought that she loved him; he had, indeed, never expected it of her. She exercised over him the influence that a beautiful woman will have on one unused to the charm of form and manner. He worshipped her. She was grateful to him. They lived together for three years; then he died; and Katharine, young, rich, and beautiful, had come to the city preparatory to her trip abroad. Now that liberty had come to her, she began to realize something of what loss of freedom meant. She had lived as deeply as a woman without love can live. She stood now on the border land of a vast and unexplored country, but she was not conscious of it.

There is, indeed, something very beautiful in the unconsciousness of a woman who has never loved. She is in the gray dawn of her life before the rose-colored morning. The first kiss of the

sun-god will work in her a transformation. And Katharine stood waiting. There is more truth in the fable of the sleeping beauty than in many a grave fact resting on authorized ground. And that I know. Better the waking to sorrow at the touch of love's lips than the dreamless sleep that knows of no such waking.

Katharine thought a good deal about Remington in those earlier days, but without realizing it. He seemed to have touched some sympathetic chord in her nature and it still vibrated. She had seen him, it is true, but once, and then only to talk in platitudes, but she still looked forward with considerable pleasure to their next meeting.

On the following Thursday after Mrs. Grant's reception she received as usual. There was a large gathering, for Katharine's "at homes" were popular. She had naturally the art of making people appear at their best when in her company. It is the secret of social success. Remington came in the latter part of the afternoon.

"I feel as if I had a certain right to monopo-

lize you," he said to Katharine, "as my appearance here must be extremely brief."

"Do you want me to recognize the right or deplore the necessity for a speedy departure?"

"I am not so unreasonable. I only ask you to remain passive."

Little Grafton interrupted them at this juncture.

"Delightful day," he said beaming. "Remington, you here? One sees you everywhere."

"But never in better company," remarked Remington languidly.

"Very good — very good indeed," said little Grafton. He looked inquisitively, first at Katharine and then at Paul.

"Seen Miss Biddleford anywhere?" he inquired.

"Not as yet," said Katharine.

"Young lady of remarkable judgment — remarkable. Am going to show her the advance sheets of my new work."

"So you are literary," said Katharine.

Little Grafton looked delighted.

"Not at all," he hastened to remark, "not at all, I assure you, only in a small way. Social sketches and such things, you know."

"You awe me," said Katharine. "Is Miss Biddleford only to be favored?"

Grafton shot a triumphant glance at Remington, but it failed to affect Paul's icy impassivity.

"Too much flattered, I assure you," little Grafton chirped. "Mustn't expect too much, you know. Only a sketch, you understand, with a few touches of caustic humor here and there, a little word-painting, you know. I will bring it to you and let you judge—soon."

"Yes," said Katharine gravely.

Little Grafton fluttered importantly away. Katharine looked at Paul and half-smiled.

"That is my passive manner, Mr. Remington," she said; "I hope that it satisfies you."

"It was a good effort," said Paul, "but misdirected."

Other arrivals claimed Katharine's attention. It was not till he came to go that Remington saw her to speak with again.

"What, already?" said Katharine, as he said good-by.

"Unfortunately, yes."

"And we were to have had a long conversation on European travel, was it not?"

"That is true. I might suggest the impracticability of prolonged conversation on anything at an afternoon reception."

"Then this must be *au revoir* and not good-by."

"And I may come some evening and discourse learnedly on weighty subjects?"

"Yes," said Katharine.

"Thank you," Remington said gravely, "I will come."

CHAPTER V.

REMINGTON accepted with alacrity Mrs. Grant's invitation to dinner. He liked his hostess immensely ; her designs on his confidence were of course sealed to him. They would not have troubled him much in any case ; he relied too firmly on the lady's well-known tact.

Mrs. Grant received him cordially.

" You won't mind a solitary evening with an old married woman, will you ? " she asked. " Winthrop is to dine to-night at his club. "

" I do not see the lady in question " said Remington.

" And you will let me talk to you and question you about things and people and your travels ? "

" To an unlimited extent, " said Paul. He felt thoroughly at home in the tasteful apart-

ment. The very *bric-à-brac* and pictures had for him a delightfully old-time feeling.

"Remington here?" said Winthrop, entering. He shook hands heartily with the younger man. "Margaret has told you, I suppose, about my club. I have unfortunately to dine out, but will see you when I come back. How's the weather out?"

"Cold," said Paul laconically.

"Had a capital case of sherry from your brother-in-law," Winthrop went on; "we must christen it. My gloves, Margaret. Well, good-by, Remington. See you on my return."

"And I hope that Mr. Remington has not forgotten me," said another voice. It was Mrs. Grant's mother who had entered, a stately old lady in lace and velvet. Paul was one of her favorites. She gave Remington her hand. "Margaret has been wondering why you did not come before," she added.

"So indeed I would have, if time had come with inclination," said Paul. "You know that, do you not, Mrs. Grant?"

But Mrs. Grant refused to commit herself. The dinner hour was a refreshing one. Paul combined the rare qualities of a good listener and talker. Mrs. Grant had the art so natural, when exercised in its perfection, of putting in exactly the right word in the right place. The elder lady had all the reminiscences of age without its garrulousness. The courses moved along smoothly. The home feeling grew fast upon Remington. After dinner he found himself alone for a while with his hostess.

"What a pleasant home yours is," Paul said enthusiastically, "I never have quite this same feeling at the houses of my other friends. I think that you must possess the gift of sympathy to a remarkable degree."

Mrs. Grant leaned contentedly back in her chair. The light from the open fire danced on the hearth. Paul noted and liked the texture and style of her gown.

"Let us say that we are *en rapport*," she said. "Sometimes a French word means so much more than its English equivalent."

"An illustration of the divine law of compensation," said Paul, "most French words, at least in the mouths of French women, meaning infinitely less."

"You like Paris?" said Mrs. Grant, feeling her way cautiously.

"I do not know. I am alternately powerfully attracted and repulsed."

"Yet you spent a full year there."

"And have regretted it ever since. I go back again, however, in three weeks' time. Such is human inconsistency."

"You go back?"

"On business. That has an important sound, do you not think so?"

"But you had intended spending your winter in this city?"

"Until very recently, yes."

"I am so disappointed, Paul. You surely do not mean it. I had confidently expected a long visit here. Why is it you go back? Why is it?"

"The explanation of important business does

not seem to impress you," said Remington, smiling.

"Paul, don't go back," said Mrs. Grant, imploringly, "don't go back."

"And why?" asked Paul lightly. "Because, as Mrs. Desmond's companion, Miss Trecartin, says, it is a wicked city?"

"I wish that you would be serious," said Mrs. Grant. "You know that I have your interest at heart."

"I know that you have always been more than kind to me," said Remington.

"Then I wish that you would let me speak frankly to you, Paul."

"You have every right to do so," said Remington.

"If you only would not mind. Your sister has written to me about it."

"About what?" asked Paul, mystified.

"About that — that unfortunate attachment; and you know, Paul, it will do no good to go back. She is married now to an Italian count.

You see I cannot let you go without speaking, Paul, and I am sorry for you."

Remington smiled involuntarily.

"The unfortunate attachment was over long ago," he said.

"And you are quite sure that you care no longer for that French woman?"

"Quite sure. There is too much contempt mingled with my memory of her for any attachment, however fleeting, to again arise."

"Was she then so bad?"

"She was a beautiful devil," said Paul bitterly, "and the less you good women know of such the better." He stood up and walked impatiently up and down the room. The recollection seemed to have stung him to action. He stopped presently before Mrs. Grant's chair.

"Thank you," he said very gently, "for your good wishes for me. I should not have the faith I have in womankind now, were it not for you. And as for my Paris trip, I give you my word of honor it has nothing to do with her."

Mrs. Grant sighed, partly for the ending of

her cherished romance, partly for Paul's want of confidence in herself. She still felt that there was something besides business that necessitated this sudden journey.

"I think that it is a misfortune," she said presently, "for you to have no special use for your time. You could do so much in many ways if you would only apply yourself to work."

"What would be the use?" said Paul. "There are many better men filling what might be my place. I don't believe that I could be of any special help, and I find drifting much pleasanter than rowing against the tide."

"But drifting is hurtful to yourself. I wish you had less money, Paul. You would find enough to do."

"I find enough now. Mere existence requires a certain effort to be endurable."

Mrs. Grant frowned.

"You annoy me very much sometimes, Paul," she said, "when you air your indifferentism. If I did not know you so well, I should lose all my

good opinion of you. I never saw a man more anxious to hide his light under a bushel."

"Or one who succeeded better," said Paul lazily. "By the way, what do you think of Mrs. Desmond?"

"I find her very fascinating, but also rather puzzling. I cannot reconcile what I know of her with the report that she married for money. She seems above that sort of thing, and yet Colonel Desmond, as I remember him, could hardly have been attractive to a young girl, who was beautiful as well."

Remington said nothing.

"You go, then, in a month's time?"

"In about three weeks."

"Well, be careful, Paul. I trust you, but I know what women are."

"Not so well, perhaps, as I do."

"You won't go without a farewell?"

"You must think me very ungrateful."

"No, only occupied." She laughed a little wickedly.

Her husband appeared in the doorway.

"Back again, Winthrop?" she said. "Paul has just been telling me that he intends returning to Paris in a few weeks' time."

"And you hear her unfeeling mirth," added Remington.

Winthrop looked puzzled. He was of the *genus homo* to whom remarks however mildly facetious presented difficulties of an insurmountable nature. He took refuge in the common-place.

"I trust that you have enjoyed the evening," he said; "I did not. I find that club cooking degenerates daily. But I am honestly sorry that you are going. You can't spend the winter here?"

"Unfortunately, no," said Remington.

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Grant's mother, appearing at the moment. The elder lady was really interested in Paul and had hoped for a longer visit.

"Well, if he will persist in working havoc with our feelings!" said Mrs. Grant. She smiled at Remington.

"If you talk in that way I shall take it as a signal for departure," said Remington. He made his farewells to them all.

"And though occupied," he said to Mrs. Grant, "I shall still do my best to call and say the inevitable good-by."

"So this is the result of your arrangement of his love affair," said Winthrop, after Remington's departure.

"What love affair?" asked his wife, with the warning note that is sometimes audible in a woman's voice. "I never led you to expect that there was a love affair. Love, indeed!"

"Ah!" said Winthrop in a tone rich with suggestion. He had experienced before these momentary lapses of memory.

But Mrs. Grant offered no further explanation.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS TRECARTIN found social life rather trying, and escaped as much of it as she could. Paris, Katharine's next destination, filled her with vague horror. She knew that it was a city of wickedness and riotous living; she had exhausted all her persuasive powers on Katharine in the vain endeavor to extract a promise to forego the trip. Mrs. Desmond remained unmoved and unconvinced. To Miss Trecartin the path of duty was thenceforth clearly, unmistakably defined. She would go with Katharine — yes; but as a protection against the snares that she felt would beset them. She strengthened her arguments on religious topics, feeling sure that they would be needed, and took on the defensive. Katharine noticed her companion's new solicitude. She saw, without dreaming the cause, that

anxiety was really preying on Miss Trecartin's health and spirits.

"You do not seem to be well lately," she said to her kindly. "What is it, Janet? Can I help you?"

Miss Trecartin flushed a little at the remark. She felt that the time for remonstrance had come. All she had heard of the wickedness of Paris flashed across her mind, but without definite shape. The only thing that stood out prominently in her memory was the fact that Sunday was not observed there as she knew it should be observed.

"Promise me," said she earnestly, "promise me, Katharine, not to go to the theatre there on the Lord's Day."

"Where?" asked Katharine, bewildered.

"In Paris," said Miss Trecartin solemnly.

Mrs. Desmond was struggling with an intense desire to laugh, but there was something pathetic in Miss Trecartin's attitude.

"Very well, I promise," said Katharine gravely.

Little Grafton came soon, as he had said, the roll of manuscript being somewhat formidable in its proportions. His manner was exalted, even inspired. He felt deeply that a critical moment had come. So did Katharine, but in a different way. Mrs. Desmond had brought Miss Trecartin with her as a sort of protection against the flow of eloquence she intuitively knew was coming. Grafton in his ordinary social state was harmless enough: as an author Katharine found him formidable.

"I could not think of listening to your literary work all alone," she said with considerable truth, "and Miss Trecartin will enjoy it with me."

Grafton professed himself deeply honored.

"I will read a trifle, — a mere bagatelle, — to begin with," he said airily. "It has been somewhat admired for its perhaps rather cynical good humor and its occasional touches of pathos. I have called it 'The Things that are to Be.'"

Katharine smiled appreciatively. She had

long cultivated that semi-unconsciousness of what was actually going on around her, by which she was able to keep up a separate train of thought, and yet appear to be listening, and to answer appropriately.

Miss Trecartin was not so fortunate. Her rigid New England conscience made concentrated thought on the subject in hand a formal necessity. Katharine's beautiful eyes were raised in rapt attention to Grafton's face, — the homage of a devotee at the shrine of literature to the enshrined one himself. Miss Trecartin looked straight in front of her with the determined glare of a stern devotion to the present cause.

Grafton coughed softly and began to read :—

“ ‘Of the many things that appear to the unprejudiced mind of an experience derived from social intercourse, perhaps none are so much to be deplored as the ceaseless saying of a trite and monotonous truth that to the casual observer might not unreasonably be deemed new.’ That,” said Grafton, pausing, “is my

proposition, which I shall further enlarge as I go on."

Miss Trecartin looked puzzled, Katharine contemplative, Grafton triumphant.

"Mr. Remington to see Mrs. Desmond," announced the maid at this juncture. Katharine rose cordially. "Mr. Grafton has just been entertaining us with some of his literary work," she said. "I believe that you have both met before; and, Miss Trecartin, you know Mr. Remington."

Paul bowed. "I am afraid that I am interrupting your reading," he began apologetically.

"No, indeed," said Katharine, as Grafton merely glared. "We must persuade Mr. Grafton to continue. All about — about the necessity of — of avoiding — certain things," finished Katharine rather weakly. "You will continue, will you not?" she asked persuasively. But Grafton would not be induced to go on. He was sensitive to atmospheric influences, and Paul's advent had jarred upon him; he felt that a discordant element had been intro-

duced, and filled Remington with a wild desire to laugh by his air of injured dignity. He replied to all apology with a sort of aggressive Christian forbearance. Remington turned his attention to Katharine; Miss Trecartin he had always found alertly suspicious of his most simple remarks. It was her habitual attitude towards Katharine's friends, but Grafton turned to her for refuge. She was, at all events, a good listener. He began a lengthy dissertation on "The Things that are to Be."

"And so I thought that I would tell you that business calls me abroad," said Remington, thinking vaguely, as he spoke, of his message from his solicitors, "and I shall probably winter in Paris."

Katharine could not repress an exclamation of delight.

"Mrs. Grant seemed to think that your stay here was to be prolonged," she said.

"And so I had thought also. This change of plan has been as sudden to myself as to her."

Grafton still talked to Miss Trecartin.

"You understand, of course, my meaning when I speak of the biological relation of things," he was saying, "and you must know that a statement of the facts taught by biologists and genealogists clearly refutes the first chapter of Genesis."

"No, I do not understand," said Miss Trecartin firmly; she knew her ground now that the Bible was being attacked.

"I hope that you have forgiven my intrusion at your *séance*," said Remington.

"Forgiven as soon as done," said Katharine.

"Had you come to the 'few touches of caustic humor' before my arrival? or had pathos predominated?"

"I think that it was mostly pathetic," said Katharine, "but really you must not talk so, Mr. Remington; I find him a very good-hearted little man indeed."

"And this apparent irrelevance?" asked Paul.

Katharine smiled. "I see that you are incorrigible," she said.

The conversation between Grafton and Janet still continued. There was a pause.

"And all liars shall have their part in the lake of brimstone and fire," said Miss Trecartin with dignity.

"Certainly, certainly," said Grafton helplessly. "I never intended — of course not — but Ferrier and Goltz both say — but you are right, certainly." He turned to Katharine nervously. "I think that I should be going," he said: "I believe that I have an engagement."

"And your essay still unread!"

"Never mind, never mind," said Grafton hastily, "Miss Trecartin and myself have just been discussing it — reviewing it, in fact." He fingered the leaves of his manuscript nervously.

"Good-evening, Miss Trecartin, Mrs. Desmond; good-evening, Remington."

"Good-evening, then, since you must go," said Katharine. "And thank you for your thoughtfulness in bringing the sketch. I shall hope to hear it another time."

"Mr. Remington is to be in Paris all next

winter; isn't that good news?" said Katharine to Miss Trecartin, after Grafton's precipitate departure. "I hope that you did not frighten Mr. Grafton away, Janet."

"I have been showing him how void of truth are the sayings of so-called scientists," answered Miss Trecartin gravely.

"Poor little man!" said Katharine sympathetically. "Miss Trecartin is troubled with principle," she added, turning to Remington. "Now, principle is all very well in its way, — I have a good deal myself, — but when you come to practice" —

"I understand you," said Remington. "I often think how easily I myself might have been led astray. You see, I am not proud. It is but a fortunate chance that my principles and practice never clash."

Katharine smiled.

"Would you rather be good and stupid, or intellectual and wicked?" she asked.

"Intellectual and wicked," answered Paul promptly. They both laughed.

"I am afraid that it would be comparatively easy to reach your level," said Katharine.

Paul rose to take his departure.

"I expect to have my sister with me during part of the season," he said. "I should like her to meet you. She is an old *habitué*, and can play the *cicerone* to perfection."

"You are very good," said Katharine sincerely.

"At Paris, then?" he said.

"At Paris," Katharine answered. She stood silent for a moment, in the middle of the hall, after his departure. The light from the waxen candles flickered on her gold-bronze hair, lying upon it lovingly, lingeringly; fell on the white eyelids, half veiling her glorious eyes; touched the white neck reverently; strayed on the folds and supple curves of her soft, clinging gown.

"You look thoughtful, Katharine," said Miss Trecartin, "and — yes, very happy."

"I am both thoughtful and happy," said Katharine. She reached up, and blew out the lights from the candles, one by one.

"Come to bed, Janet," she said, smiling at Miss Trecartin's air of wisdom, that the putting out of the light had seemingly simultaneously extinguished; "for, if very thoughtful and happy, I am unfortunately sleepy also."

"I hope that Mr. Grafton will remember my quotations," said Miss Trecartin, pausing, ghost-like, at the door of her room.

"Undoubtedly," answered Katharine, smiling at the recollection.

CHAPTER VII.

EVERY one knows that time is not a fixed quantity ; every one has experienced the crowding of a year into an hour, the stretching out of an hour over a seemingly endless space. It is joy and sorrow that count, not the minutes and seconds.

Katharine was in Paris, — bright, beautiful Paris ; and for her, also, the time had slipped by so quickly that it seemed impossible, by any reasoning, that she could have been there so long. She had found so many friends and so many occupations. She felt a peculiar affinity for the gay world about her, and the liking was apparently returned. Remington found her surrounded by a new court on his arrival in the city : “ *La belle Americaine* ” had become a favorite. He would have liked better to have her look only to his good offices

for her pleasure ; but, finding her independent of him for entertainment, he took matters philosophically, and became a familiar figure at her receptions. Miss Trecartin still played the part of skeleton at the feast. She spoke French with a delightfully Anglo-Saxon accent, and maintained an armed peace, disconcerting by her unvarnished directness not a few of the fluent, compliment-loving Frenchmen who came to see Katharine. She was as much out of her element as Katharine was in it ; but she felt more strongly than ever that her duty was to shield her companion from the dangers and whirlpools of social life. Katharine looked on Miss Trecartin as a monument of truth ; she alternately felt amused by her and respected her ; but she valued Miss Trecartin's warnings only as giving evidence of the intrinsic worth of a true New England nature.

“Gather ye roses while ye may.” It was an excellently well-devised motto, and Katharine lived up to it.

Among the men who came oftenest to see

Katharine were two,—the Marquis de Beauprès and an artist from Bohemia, Jean François Rouget : the former essentially a man of the world, whose nobility dated from the first empire ; the latter a queer little creature made up of nerves and enthusiasms, who could laugh or weep hysterically, and who fell in love and out again with astonishing facility ; petted by society for his last picture, that had somehow caught the public fancy, and allowed all the liberty pertaining to the phrase, “O madame !” (or monsieur !) “what would you ? it is only Rouget.”

Katharine had heard of him, and expressed a wish to meet him. The Marquis de Beauprès had told her many things about the little artist that had amused her. They faintly reminded her also of Grafton, the little man whom she had formerly known ; but the types were, in reality, different. Grafton, she had heard, was married to Miss Biddleford and the two millions. He had chirped his despair at Katharine's departure for France ; but the human

heart needs consolation, and found it in this case in Miss Biddleford's admiring homage. He now had a companion who believed in him, and in literature: the social sketches would henceforth have at least one interested auditor.

Rouget, the marquis told Katharine, was unique in his personality. Some of his remarks had found their way to Katharine. He had been reproached, they said, for his extreme susceptibility and fickleness, and the little artist had replied with fire, "That he smiled on all women, only because all women were wont to smile upon him."

"I burn my lamp at many altars," he went on vehemently. "And why? Is it not for me an artistic necessity? Whenever I see a beautiful woman, I bow down and worship." But his ideas of beauty were singularly unlike those of the world at large. "I classify and arrange my backgrounds," he was wont to say. "Will madame in rags be the same ethereal being as madame in ball-dress? *Presque jamais!* She

is ravishing, angelic, if you will, with the haze of wealth and rank about her; but, *ma foi!* how she would jar upon you with poverty at her elbow! No, it is indeed the background that is important. The Venus of the slums had a certain poetry, a grace: in society, *mais mon Dieu*, she would be detestable." So Rouget had spoken to the marquis.

"You, then, admit of no exception?" asked de Beauprès, with some faint show of amusement.

Rouget replied with the inevitable shrug.

"What would you?" he said. "It is for an ideal that I look."

He should see Madame Desmond, thought the marquis; and Rouget, on introduction, did not disappoint expectation. He fell openly and deeply in love with Katharine at first sight. He came to see her frequently, and Katharine found him amusing. She did not in the least believe in his enthusiasms, among which she counted the little artist's devotion to herself; but she liked him well enough to

make him a frequent visitor on her afternoons. But Rouget was, for once, painfully in earnest. The time which he was forced to pass away from her he spent in making sketches of her, ideal heads wofully out of drawing, but still bearing upon them the seal of artistic fervor and inspiration. His shabby velvetten coat became a stranger in Bohemia. His old haunts knew him not. He rhapsodized in long letters about Katharine; and, strangely enough, it was generally to the Contessa Coroni, Remington's old love, that the letters were directed. He would talk of her to any one who would listen.

When he was with her, he would make open love to her, at which Katharine laughed. That she did so did not distress him; that she listened to him at all was sufficient encouragement.

Remington came in one day, to find him lying at Katharine's feet, and quoting poetry to her. Rouget did not seem at all disturbed by his entrance, but Katharine flushed a little. She was not quite sure that Remington would understand the position.

"You have met Monsieur Rouget, have you not?" she asked. Remington bowed. Rouget took no notice. He was looking at Katharine in a sort of dreamy rapture. Paul began to talk to Katharine. They both felt a certain restraint, and discussed current topics with all the formality of a first acquaintance,—the opera, the theatres, local news, Continental gossip. Remington was speaking of his sister when Katharine suddenly remembered something that she wished to ask him. She leaned a little forward. "That reminds me," she said, "of a thing I have wanted to tell you,—to ask you, rather. Will you do me a favor, Mr. Remington?"

Rouget had, so far, not spoken. Now he raised himself slowly on one elbow.

"Do not move, I beg of you," he said to Katharine, in a tone of agonized entreaty. "Only a moment. I must catch that pose, that expression." He was rapidly sketching while he spoke. Katharine leaned back and laughed. Remington's expression and Rou-

get's manner had been too much for her sense of the ludicrous. The little artist uttered a despairing sound.

"Why could you not have waited an instant?" he said reproachfully.

Remington looked disgusted.

"Your friend flatters adroitly," he said.

Rouget ignored the remark.

"I have been waiting so long for just that look," he said, "and now it is lost, — gone. — vanished."

"I think that I would rather pose for you at another time," Katharine answered.

She was beginning to be annoyed.

"And the favor?" Remington asked.

"It was nothing ; only a momentary desire to ask you something — a desire that has now vanished."

Rouget rose slowly. He stood before Katharine, an abject and repentant figure.

"I have offended you," he said miserably, "I will go." He bowed to Remington, and took Katharine's hand.

"You will forgive me? I may come again?"

Katharine was struggling with an intense desire to laugh.

"Of course," she said indifferently, "come if you wish."

"I am desolated, annihilated," said the little artist. "I am a miserable creature, but you, — you are a divine one. Adieu, Monsieur Remington," he said, turning with elaborate politeness to Paul, and literally fled from the room.

Katharine's composure gave way, but Remington did not smile.

"You must make allowance for artistic temperament," she said to him.

"He seems to have a great deal of it. Is he often taken this way?"

"Often! He is never otherwise."

"And you enjoy that sort of thing?"

"Intensely."

"And I am glad to know what you like. I should not have thought that precisely that style of thing would please you. I am mistaken."

"Undoubtedly."

Remington began to be angry.

"I wish that you would sometimes be serious," he said, — "not that I have the shadow of a right to ask you."

"Not the shadow of a right," assented Katharine parenthetically.

"Are you, then, sincere in saying that an inane little creature like this artist, with no manners to speak of" — he broke off impatiently, "do you really mean that he can do anything but bore you?"

Katharine unfurled her fan slowly.

"The question is hardly important," she said, "and grows tiresome. You were speaking of the opera?"

Remington looked at her curiously.

Katharine's was a new experience.

"You administer reproof adroitly," he said, "but I must beg your pardon for occasioning the display of talent. The opera is a good one. You ought to see it. You have heard, I suppose, the new story about the *soi-disant* Prince

Sacheroff and the *diva*? The prince, you remember, had her sing for him privately in his own theatre; and presented her, some time during the evening, with a bouquet of rare orchids held together by a magnificent clasp of diamonds. She accepted gracefully, but the next day it is said that a bill arrived, for two thousand francs. The prince gave the required amount, and sent at the same time a note, in which he implored the fair *diva's* clemency for the oversight, and begged her to return the clasp which had been so unfortunate as to vex her. The sweet singer's rage has formed a happy topic for society in Paris;—but the story does not apparently interest you. You have heard it, perhaps, before?"

"I have not heard it. I was merely admiring the sternness of manner with which you conducted the recital. Do you know that I begin to be afraid of you, Mr. Remington? And all on account of poor Rouget's rather demonstrative nature."

Remington smiled involuntarily.

"He is demonstrative," he admitted, "or we will call it native affability intensified. But don't give me credit for unamiable intentions. If you wish, I can proceed at length in the same line. I will collect Parisian gossip, and regale you with it."

The Marquis de Beauprès was announced.

Katharine smiled rather mischievously.

"You will now have an excellent model," she said to Paul, as she went forward to greet the new-comer. Remington did not have much chance for further conversation with Katharine. New arrivals were being announced, and he at length made his farewell.

"When may I see you?" he asked.

"On Thursday," said Katharine.

"But that is the day you receive."

"Come early," said Katharine: "I have no other day disengaged. I wish that I had."

"That will do as well," said Remington with a feeling of satisfaction. He thanked her and

took his leave. As he passed out, he saw the Marquis de Beauprès kissing Katharine's hand as a preliminary to departure ; the sight somehow jarred upon him, and he was unreasonably annoyed that it had happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

REMINGTON'S married sister, Lady Charteris, had come to Paris also ; ostensibly for the season's pleasures, in reality to find out what kept her brother so faithfully there. She ascertained that he never went to see the contessa, and she also found out that he went often to visit the new American beauty, Mrs. Desmond. She went to see Katharine, and liked her conditionally. She wanted Paul to marry a title, and Katharine must not be allowed to interfere with this project. So she gave up her natural taste for English country life, wintered in Paris, and watched patiently for a chance to stem the current of events.

But she was a very wise woman, as well as a patient one, and until the occasion offered, she contented herself with rehearsing, for Remington's benefit, the charms of a certain Lady

Gladys ; but her efforts to pique her brother's curiosity, and excite his interest, had so far proved all too unavailing. Meanwhile, who was this Mrs. Desmond ? Lady Charteris wrote to Mrs. Grant, as the one person likely to be of help to her in her research. Before very long the answer had come back, but not exactly such a one as Lady Charteris could have wished.

"There is no history," Mrs. Grant wrote, in reply to her friend's question. "Mrs. Desmond was married very young, to a retired army officer ; some people add, 'for money.' At any rate, he was rich, and left his entire fortune to her unconditionally at his death. Her mother came from one of our best families, and was a Miss Otis. She married somewhat beneath her, and went to live in the West. He was an engineer, and they were, I believe, quite poor. Neither is living at present. Mrs. Desmond seems cultured and refined. You have probably seen that she is beautiful, and she was a favorite while here in this city. I know, dear Alice, that Paul's marriage to any one but Gladys

Ferrier will be a trial to you ; but I think you had better trust his judgment, as you cannot, certainly, oppose his will."

And that was all the information that rewarded Lady Charteris's efforts. Nevertheless, she was still hopeful. She remained in Paris : she watched and waited. There were other people, as well, to whom Remington's apparent attachment to Katharine afforded food for reflection, and among them the Contessa Caroni, she who had once been the very devoted object of all Paul's hopes and desires. That was in his younger days, when the woman's fairness had effectually concealed her falseness ; and to her now, thanks to a sudden awakening, did Remington owe all his present distrust and contempt for women.

The contessa had taken his boyish love and faith and confidence. They were pretty toys for an hour's pastime, and growing tired of the game, she had unhesitatingly and without a pang tossed them aside. It had been a bitter experience for the boy, with which to enter

upon life; and time, though it had destroyed the unhappy infatuation, had not served to restore his lost faith and confidence. Only now, in the presence of a new, strong love; only now, in the company of a pure woman, — was found a counteracting force opposed to the hurtful influence, the work of the first woman he had thought he had known, and, Heaven help him, had believed that he had loved. She was now to him nothing more than an object of contemptuous indifference. It was out of her power, now and forever, to stir his pulse to one moment's faster beating. He had seen the mask of her beauty lifted, and the sight that lay beneath was not one to be forgotten.

But the contessa believed differently. She had immense faith in herself, and in her powers of fascination. She took a keen interest in Remington's devotion to this Madame Desmond, but his attitude did not trouble her. Paul was trying to make her jealous. Well, she would be jealous presently. Meanwhile, there was plenty of time, and the sight was amusing.

She smiled at the transparent artifice, and she, too, watched and waited.

And Katharine was happy, intensely and consciously happy, as she had never been before. She did not stop to reason about it. She felt that a dream must not be handled too often or observed too closely. She was by turns in wild spirits, and again strangely quiet.

Miss Trecartin, accepting the fact of the presence of these vagaries, never tried to explain them. She laid everything incomprehensible or alarming at the door of the wicked city. The air of Paris could account for a good deal. It was, no doubt, that which made Katharine now so elusively tender in her manner, now so almost reckless in her merri-ment. Remington saw the change also. There were moments when it seemed to him that a veil was lifted, and he saw the true woman as she really was; the next, and there had come a subtle something between them. He had been very near to her before; now he was a thousand miles off.

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"Do you know that you are very incomprehensible?" he said to her one day.

Katharine smiled.

"Because I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve?" she said.

"That is asking the impossible, perhaps. Have you a heart to wear?"

"Find out, and tell me," said Katharine.

"I accept your challenge," said Remington gravely. But all trace of gravity had disappeared from Katharine's face.

"There is the marquis," she said gayly, and rising as she spoke. "He always comes when you appear. There must be a subtle bond of sympathy between you."

Remington looked moodily after her. She was very provoking at times, and a somewhat novel experience always. And all through the time of his coming she was just as illusive. He heard her talking to a friend of his, an Englishman, about some reception she had attended.

"And I remember once, also, going," she

was saying, "where every one present was a celebrity of no small order. Some were successful novelists, some critics and reviewers, some actors and actresses. They were all names familiar to me, and meeting their possessors was like the coming true of a nice fairy-tale. But it was also rather amusing. You see that, as far as I knew, I was the only one who had done nothing remarkable. It was, really, now that I think of it, quite a distinction in itself to be commonplace in such company."

"You were not, then, sufficiently over-awed to forget to be amused?"

"No. Who could help it? You see, when these noted people were introduced to me, they, one and all, looked *so* puzzled." Katharine laughed. Remington thought that he had never heard quite that quality of pure merriment before.

"'Desmond! Desmond!' they must have said," Katharine went on, "'where have I heard that name before?' At last one of them

took heart. He was a novelist of distinction. 'I don't think that I caught your *nom de plume*,' he said. 'I believe that our hostess usually whispers it before presenting us, but this time she must have forgotten. Will you not confide in me, Mrs. Desmond?' "

"And you did so?"

"Yes, I explained, and he seemed so much relieved. He said that every one was riding his or her hobby so hard and so fast, that it made him feel particularly happy to meet some one who had not mounted."

"So you withdrew into a corner, I suppose, and became more and more fascinated with each other. I really think that your mutual dependence and alliance, offensive and defensive, furnishes sufficient material for a romance."

"Does it? I, at least, enjoyed myself immensely. I remember *that*, and I remember also trying hard to be grave and impressive, and failing dismally."

Remington listened contentedly. He liked

to hear the sound of her voice. Its inflections were well known to him.

Rouget was announced. The little artist had staid away for nearly a month since his last visit to Katharine, when he had so unfortunately offended her! It had been an heroic punishment. Now would she understand and receive him with favor again? He presented himself humbly.

Katharine smiled on him.

"You have been too long away, monsieur," she said.

Rouget could hardly believe his ears. Was she, then, reproaching him, actually reproaching him, and for staying away? The little artist was overflowing with delight. He wanted to kiss the hem of her garment—to show his delight at this extraordinary favor in some extraordinary way. But he remembered in time that Katharine disliked much demonstration. He turned, and encountered Miss Tre-cartin. Here was a safety-valve. He had always regarded her with a reverence due to

any one so near Katharine. He attacked her forthwith. There was a flow of eloquence and many gestures expressive of delight. To Miss Trecartin, they conveyed the idea of pain.

She asked, in painfully exact French, if she could be of any assistance. Was he suffering?

"*Mais oui*," the little artist's heart was breaking. Did Miss Trecartin think that the adorable creature, her friend, now talking with the monkey-faced, repulsive, detestable *attaché* opposite; did she think that that angelic and seraphic being, Madame Desmond, would ever grow to smile upon him?

Miss Trecartin was puzzled. She had laboriously followed the thread of the conversation, but she had received the impression that Rouget wanted to know if Katharine would object to her, Miss Trecartin, prescribing for him.

Her face brightened at this solution of the problem. If there was anything that she was sure of, it was the efficacy of New England

remedies. The little Frenchman was, then, relatively speaking, a man of sense. She began a long discourse on the merits of arrow-root broth and herb-tea, necessarily conducting most of the conversation in English. Rouget listened patiently. The words "*pauvre homme*" coming frequently from Miss Trecartin's lips had given him a ray of light.

Miss Trecartin doubtless meant that he was too poor to aspire to madame's hand. "I will do my best," he said fervently, "I will soon change my present miserable condition. You are right. I will follow your advice. A thousand thanks for your kindness."

Miss Trecartin was gratified, and Rouget went away with a hundred new schemes for amassing wealth. He would paint a picture, — such a picture. He would gain fame and money, — yes, much money, — and then, adorable, majestic, angelic Katharine! He actually shook his fist, from a retired corner, at the *attaché* who had dared to absorb her attention, and all this in the exuberance of his delight.

At the other end of the *salon* another conversation was taking place.


"I think, monsieur," Remington was saying to de Beauprès, "that you have had Madame Desmond long enough. You will agree with me, I am sure, that it is now my turn."

The two men looked at each other steadily. Then Remington, with a half-smile, had seated himself by Katharine.

She had tacitly consented to the change, but she smiled, nevertheless, at de Beauprès. And it was a singular fact that the marquis felt partially satisfied. He translated the look in his own way. To-day, was the Englishman's; to-morrow, his, Emil Joseph de Beauprès. He looked at Remington almost amiably, and at Katharine with a tenderly comprehensive gaze, and withdrew.

"I don't see what you can find to like in that man," began Remington, in a dissatisfied tone, as the marquis disappeared among the other guests.

"Is it so necessary that you should see?" asked Katharine.



"Yes," said Remington calmly. There was the sound of animated conversation all around them. There were many people present, but Katharine felt as though, somehow, she was very far from it all, — she and Remington. She raised her eyes to his.

"You take too much for granted," she said coldly.

"Say, rather, that I aspire too much," said Remington. "But even then," he added slowly, "even then, you would, I think, be wrong."

Katharine flushed.

"I should like you to think a little," said Paul, "of my hope, of my aspirations." He had spoken earnestly. There was silence. Was Katharine's dream coming true? There was a wild, glad beating of her heart; a new, strange joy that thrilled her pulses. She looked at Paul with great content, for she knew now, at last, she loved him.

Katharine did not speak. She wanted to be alone: to think about this strange, beautiful thing; to hide, somewhat, the gladness that

she felt shining in her eyes ; to still the beating of her troublesome heart. She rose slowly.

"You are going to leave me," Paul said reproachfully.

"Yes," said Katharine, smiling, "for a little time. I shall be back again before you miss me."

She stood, tall and gracious, before him, a beautiful woman, with the new and crowning beauty of her great joy shining in her eyes, sounding gladly in her voice. Remington had loved her from the first, and to-day he felt that Katharine had stamped his love with her seal : it was hers, and she knew it. Paul walked home as one who holds close a picture of some rare and beautiful thing ; the memory of it was to be a talisman and an omen for the to-morrow.

CHAPTER IX.

“THE Marquis de Beauprès,” announced the maid. Katharine received him cordially. His visit had surprised her, but she was too happy herself to be ungracious to others.

“You have come unexpectedly, and must take the consequences,” she said, indicating the flowers around her which she was arranging. “That is, if you do not mind my going on with my work. You will let me finish my decorations?”

“By all means,” said the marquis. He seemed pale and nervous. Katharine noticed the change and wondered at it, but she went on talking easily and naturally. The marquis followed her movements with watchful eyes. This visit had for him a special significance, but Katharine did not give him much time for thinking. She was conscious of a desire to

keep to safe subjects ; and, as her visitor would not talk, she went on quickly from one subject to another, without taking much apparent notice of her guest's random answers. She prolonged the arrangement of her flowers as much as possible, but at length everything was finished.

"I love flowers," she said, "and try to have them at all times. It is my one extravagance. I hope that you approve it."

The marquis smiled affirmatively.

"You are wondering why I come to-day, and at this hour," he said ; "I will tell you."

"No, do not tell me," said Katharine hastily, "let me imagine. There is really no need for explanation — between friends."

"But I have a great deal to say to you," began the marquis.

"Don't say it," said Katharine ; "again let me imagine. It is so much more interesting to imagine, don't you think so ? And I have some news for you also."

She began to talk quickly about the topics of the hour. The marquis listened patiently.



He was not to be diverted so easily from his purpose. He had come with a settled resolve to speak to Katharine of a subject which he flattered himself was very near to his heart; and which, without flattery or misconception, he knew to be extremely vital to his purse. But Katharine would not understand him. She did not want any other man making love to her—now. She treated the marquis with an airy badinage that disconcerted him. He found himself baffled, eluded at every point. There was nothing for it but plain speaking.

“You are very cruel to-day,” he said at last. “Why is it? I have come to tell you of something near to my heart, very near to my heart, madame, and you will not listen. You laugh, you amuse yourself with me.”

Katharine absently studied the pattern on her fan. Then she looked up.

“You have heard of such a thing as caprice,” she said. “It is a woman’s privilege, and sometimes her defence. You will respect my caprice, I am sure. And I am not in the mood for serious talking.”

The marquis thought of his unpaid bills, of his clamorous creditors.

"How can I be silent, madame," he said boldly, "when, as you know, I love you?"

There was a moment's silence. Katharine flushed angrily, then she laughed.

"One would almost believe you, monsieur," she said, "you feign earnestness so well. No, do not interrupt me." She looked at him steadily. "Be wise in time," she said slowly.

It was a warning. The marquis understood now. It was not the time or the place. He must wait. He was angry, disappointed, baffled; but he was man of the world enough to know better than to push his cause farther then. He was not prepared to lose; he must temporize, and hope for the future. And now he must win back Katharine's confidence. He followed her lead with admirable self-command, but it was not a pleasant time for either of them. Remington came in late. He found them apparently the best of friends. It was then that the marquis had a small revenge.

He infused a certain tenderness into his manner to Katharine. She inwardly resented the change, but she felt hopeless to prevent it. It was too impalpable to be quarrelled with. Remington felt it also. He became angry with Katharine without exactly knowing why. He had come with all sorts of roseate dreams of this visit to her, and now here was that smooth-tongued, polished Frenchman, destroying, by his very presence, the hopeful fabric of days. It was an unfortunate hour, and only the marquis seemed to enjoy it. Remington at last turned suddenly to Katharine.

"I shall have to go now," he said formally; "but," with a sudden relenting towards her, "may I not come soon again, at another time?"

"Yes," said Katharine.

The marquis also rose.

"I, too, must make my farewell," he said, "but you have been very kind. I, too, will come again, with your permission. You go my way?" he asked politely of Remington.

"No," said Paul briefly. The marquis still smiled. They had reached the street when he turned again to Remington.

"Madame Desmond," he said ecstatically. "Ah, *mon ami*, but is she not angelic?"

Remington subdued a certain powerful desire.

"I have not the time," he said frigidly, "to discuss madame with you. Our ways, I believe, lie differently. Good-morning."

"These English," said the marquis, under his breath, tranquilly apologetic — but Paul was already out of earshot, and walking rapidly. He had an engagement with his sister, for which he was already late.

Lady Charteris received him with an air of long-suffering that boded ill for their interview.

"I thought it hardly worth while to go now," she said, "and have dismissed the carriage."

"I am very sorry," said Paul. "I was detained."

"You were detained?" said Lady Charteris, in a tone full of meaning. "Where were you detained, Paul?"

"I was at Mrs. Desmond's," said Remington.

Lady Charteris was a patient woman, but even the most patient of women will sometimes lose heart, and with it prudence. She forgot her usual wise restraint.

"Do you mean to marry this Mrs. Desmond?" she asked bluntly.

Paul's face assumed an indefinable expression.

"If she will honor me so far," he said formally.

Tears of vexation and disappointment came to his sister's eyes.

"I think, Paul," she said unwisely, "that you owe something to your family. Gladys is a sweet and charming English girl, and likes you very much. Every one knows who she is; no one knows what this American may be."

"Stop!" said Paul, "you will try to speak respectfully of my future wife."

His sister had never seen him so angry. She took refuge, after the manner of her sex, in tears.

Paul looked at her silently. Lady Charteris went on crying, softly but systematically. Paul's face relaxed somewhat.

How often has a handkerchief not been a flag of truce?

He came and seated himself near her.

"Alice," he said, with the least touch of amusement, "how long are you going to keep this up?" Only sobs for an answer.

"Because," continued Paul unfeelingly, "I know so well what it is for. You want me to do something. Out with it."

Lady Charteris was thinking busily. It was true that she did want something. She wanted intensely to have Paul come to reason, to leave this Katharine Desmond, and so kill his infatuation; and then there was Gladys, willing to forget and to forgive all. She was glad that Paul was so handsome; it had saved him the consequence of his rash acts often enough; it would do so now, if only he would be reasonable.

She proceeded, therefore, according to the rule that governs such matters, to gradually

come back to her usual calm serenity. The sobs grew fainter, then ceased altogether ; presently the handkerchief was withdrawn, and she sat up. Remington had watched the stages patiently. Experience had taught him the futility of hurry. Lady Charteris regarded him with watchful if reproachful eyes.

“You make things very hard for me, Paul,” she said. “After all, it is only your good that I have at heart, if I do want you to do something for me.”

“I know,” said Paul, “you are one of the best sisters that a fellow ever had ; but I am afraid that I have an altogether natural weakness of wanting to manage my own affairs. Now, don’t begin again, Alice ; if I can oblige you, I will.”

Lady Charteris would have preferred a more circuitous route ; she would have liked to lead up to her request. But she knew her brother well enough to feel that simple directness was what he wanted, and what she must try, if she hoped for any chance of success.

"Then, Paul," she said very earnestly, "I only ask you to come back to London with me for a month or two; that is all. But if you only would" —

Paul did not answer. The question had come to him often enough, Heaven knows. Would it not be better to leave Katharine for a while, as his sister had suggested? All the old leaven of cynicism and distrust had risen within him. He must be sure this time, — sure of her, of himself. It might be the better way — and then the return. He got up and walked rapidly up and down the room. There was a bitter struggle going on within him. He stopped finally before his sister. "I will go," he said shortly, "but it must be soon."

"As soon as you like," said his sister delightedly. Now that the battle was won, Lady Charteris felt herself once more. She was too wise to speak to him again of Katharine.

"To-morrow?" she asked.

"Yes," said Paul moodily. He turned and walked out of the room. In another moment

he was driving rapidly in the direction of Katharine's apartments. She had been receiving, but now only a few of her guests remained. She had hardly hoped to see Paul so soon again, but she was very glad that he had come. She hid her pleasure under an air of indifference, that most powerful of woman's weapons — but Paul did not notice it.

"Send these people away," he said. "I want to speak to you." He had begun already to repent of his bitter bargain. Katharine manifested no very great surprise. She was used to Paul's masterful manner: it had amused her at first; now it did not displease her. She had enough of the adoring posture in other men. Before very long they were alone together. Katharine had, with perfect tact, succeeded in sending them all happily away.

To an *attaché* she had said confidentially, —

"Is it not hard, monsieur, to be bright and entertaining when one has been to the opera the previous night, and has, consequently, not retired until nearly three in the morning? I

“speak to you because, if I bore you, I want you at least to know the reason of my present loss of ideas” — and the diplomat, full of pity for the beautiful woman who had spoken in so friendly a manner to him, took the hint without realizing it as being one.

To another Katharine said, in passing, —

“I know that you are a very busy man, monsieur ; but women, you know, are ever unreasonable. Now, I have a matter which I want to talk over with you, — not to-day, I really cannot take any more of your time to-day, — but soon. Whenever you can so arrange, will you not come to me ?” And he, too, had gone away happy.

“We poor women,” said Katharine to a lady friend, “we only can know how hard it is to hide our weariness. Sometimes I wonder how you can do it so successfully. I think, indeed, that it is a gift, and one hardly to be acquired by even years of practice. And during the wear and tear of the season’s pleasures we have, do we not, at least plenty of practice ?”

And a little later, talking to a man who had

just returned from Africa, and who had been telling her of his travels, Katharine gave a little start. The clock had struck the hour slowly.

"Why, how late it is!" she said *naïvely*. "Monsieur, you make yourself altogether too interesting. My guests, and the lapse of time, have both been quite forgotten; I have literally been with you in Africa. But this is dreadful: you must reform."

And so, by degrees, the force of example did its work, one departure following close upon another, and Katharine and Paul were alone.

Remington had waited impatiently, savagely, for the last man to go. Now that they were alone, he hardly knew what to say. There was no question of what he wanted to do. He wanted, with all the imperiousness of love, to take Katharine in his arms and kiss the color back into her white, beautiful face, for Katharine was a little frightened by his manner. He wanted to assure himself that she loved him, he wanted to have her for his own, to possess her fully, exclusively; but he was to do none of

these things. He was bound by a sort of tacit promise to his sister ; and, in spite of his love, the old demon of suspicion and distrust was alive within him.

He looked moodily at her.

"I am going away," he said shortly and without preface, "and I have come to say good-by."

Katharine turned deathly white. She was conscious of nothing save the paralyzing sense that to-day he was with her, and to-morrow he would be gone, and the next day, and the next.

"Going away!" she said. Her voice was dull ; it was as if somewhere a string had snapped. Remington saw the change. He was, with all his man's cruelty in love, glad that she was suffering. But only for a moment. Katharine's pride came to her aid.

"Then I must wish you *bon voyage*," she said. It was very nearly her usual tone now. She began to talk feverishly ; anything to keep back the thought of those to-morrows. She never thought of his return. Would he have told her thus if he were coming back ? Per-

haps she had shown too plainly that his presence pleased her. She must change that now.

"I hope that you will enjoy your journey," she said. "Where is it that you are going?"

"To London."

"Of course to London; and the weather is delightful. You will be in the height of the season. I can imagine it all. It is really hardly worth while wishing you good luck, is it? when one is so sure you will have it."

"I am going to-morrow," said Paul, "and what do I care about the delights of the season?" — He stopped with an effort.

"Do not you?" asked Katharine. "I had always thought that the gayeties of life appealed strongly to you. They do to me. But if you are going so soon, I must not keep you. You must have plenty to see to."

Poor Katharine! She must keep up the comedy to the last, but she wanted it over quickly while she had strength. Then she could be quiet, and alone, to think. Remington stood up.

"You remind me of my duty now, as always," he said ironically. He was disappointed. He had not expected, indeed, that Katharine would weep and protest; but — he was disappointed that she did not do so.

Katharine, too, stood. She looked very beautiful in her white, clinging gown, and the shadows lying deep down in her eyes.

Remington turned to go, then came back. He took Katharine's passive hand and kissed it.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," Katharine answered softly. She smiled bravely. It was thus that Paul remembered her.

CHAPTER X.

REMINGTON went back with his sister to London, as he had promised, and the fashionable world received him with open arms — their prodigal back again. Mothers with marriageable daughters smiled upon him, but not more sweetly than the daughters themselves, and Remington went everywhere. He dutifully allowed himself to be introduced to all the leading belles and beauties of the season. He danced with them, talked to them, made mild love to them, that deceived no one, least of all himself; and throughout it all — through club and ballroom and dance and flirtation — floated the picture of a tall, beautiful woman with lovable mouth, and wonderful, changeful gray eyes. It turned everything to dust and ashes by comparison. People complained that Paul Remington was changed — anxious moth-

ers, that he was not to be depended upon, and his vagaries past finding out ; the pretty daughters were apt to find him a trifle absent-minded in his replies to their sweetest speeches. At last Remington could stand it no longer. He appeared before his sister, equipped and ready to travel. Lady Charteris's heart sank. That look on Paul's face could only mean one thing. She feigned, however, not to understand it.

"You are going to run down for a day or two, to your country-house?" she asked.

"No," said Paul briefly, "I am not ; I am going back — to her."

"To Gladys Ferrier?"

"To Katharine Desmond." How delightful that name sounded. Now that he thought of it, he had not heard it for nearly a month. Lady Charteris sighed, but she had the advantage of knowing when she was beaten. If Paul could find no pleasure — no, nor satisfaction — in the company of that season's array of beauties, neither was there hope anywhere ; and, after all, it might have been worse. Katharine

was rich and distinctly refined. At any rate, protest now would do no good.

"Well, go to her, Paul," she said at last. Remington smiled on his sister.

"You have taken away nearly a month from her, and from me," he said; "but I won't reproach you. You will be ready to receive her when she comes back with me? — that is, if she will come back." The afterthought had suggested a new face to the matter; but she should; he would have it so.

"I shall be ready," his sister answered. She was making the best of it, manfully. Remington kissed her and — was gone. It was all very natural to him. Lovers, in fact, are seldom appreciative.

The hours seemed long to Remington that divided him from his journey's end; and Paris actually reached, and the Channel crossed, he had much to do to prevent himself from flying directly to Katharine. He spent the interval which he felt must elapse before the earliest hour when he could reasonably appear, in

selecting some flowers to take to her. The florist found him exacting: each bud must be perfect; nothing that was not both rare and beautiful would do.

There wanted some time yet after his selection, but Remington seemed possessed with a demon of impatience. He took a fiacre, promised the man double fare if he would drive quickly, and reached Katharine's apartments in less time than he would have believed. It was early, very early, but Katharine would understand, — at any rate, he would wait no longer.

Arriving, he inquired for Madame Desmond of the landlady, a stout, well-preserved dame in a rustling black silk. She looked sympathetically at Remington. He was not the first, by any means, that had come with a like question. She did not at once answer. "Madame Desmond," began Paul again, impatiently.

"Has gone away." Paul looked at her blankly.

"Monsieur is disappointed." She ventured the last observation with a good deal of kindli-

ness. Remington did not seem to understand. He was dazed, like one who has received a heavy blow.

"Gone away," he repeated stupidly. He rallied himself with an effort.

"You have her address?" he said.

"Alas! no, monsieur; there is no address."

After Paul's departure a fit of restlessness had seized upon Katharine. Paris was hateful to her. Everything there reminded her of Paul, and she had resolutely decided to think no more of him. Easily resolved indeed, when with every heart-beat came the bitter-sweet remembrance; when she found herself watching, actually watching for him! She scorned herself for the act, but she watched on. But, at any rate, she would leave Paris. The conclusion arrived at was immediately acted upon. A week after Remington's departure found Katharine and Miss Trecartin quietly settled in a little village in the south of France. Here, at least, she could think. There were no prying eyes here to guess her secret. Presently she

would gain courage, — she had given her heart's love unasked, uncared for, yet life had been very sweet to her. There was a new life waiting for her — life without him. She knew what that meant now, but presently she would gain courage. She must go back to it all, only too soon ; but, for a little while at least, she might live with her sorrow, unquestioned and undisturbed. She must grow a little accustomed to its face — the face of this, her heart's companion forever. And so it came about that "*La belle Americaine, si belle, mais si triste,*" came to be known very well throughout the parish.

The news of Katharine's departure had stunned Remington, but only for a time. It was a difficult task to trace and follow her ; the marquis had found it too difficult, and had given it up ; but what are difficulties — what, even, are impossibilities — to true love ? It took Remington a week to answer that question, the next he was again on his way to — Katharine.

He arrived at the little village early in the

summer evening, and went straight to the inn — there was but one. Katharine was staying at one of the cottages near by, but this, of course, he did not know. The coming of another stranger in the place was necessarily the theme of a good deal of surprise and curiosity. Three new arrivals in so short a time! The thing had been seldom repeated in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. So it happened that while Paul was doing his best to find out Katharine's exact location, Katharine, in turn, was being treated with an exact and detailed description of the new arrival: "*Si grand de taille, madame, et si beaux.*" She had not paid much attention to it all: there was only a feeling of annoyance that her retreat had so soon been invaded. Experience had taught her the rapidity with which men were wont to find means to make her acquaintance; and this new arrival, her landlady had said, was a man — and a young man. When Katharine took her usual evening walk that night, she did it with a feeling of regret. It was probably her last uninterrupted

ramble. In this she was partly right, and partly wrong. She walked rapidly in the direction of the forest. The lowing of cattle, driven home for the night, was heard faintly in the distance. There was an indescribable calm in the air, the hush of twilight. Tears came to Katharine's eyes, the first that she had shed since Paul's departure : a certain restful feeling came over her. She looked up. The stranger, whoever he might be, was coming towards her, and — his walk was strangely familiar. Where had she seen that figure before, and that erect, proud carriage of the head ?

"Katharine," said the stranger, and now Katharine knew.

That was all. Paul was there. She was glad, she dared not think how glad.

"You have come back," she said almost doubtfully, half to herself, half to him. It was not what, in the torturing consciousness of her proud spirit, she would have wished to say. Her pride had deserted her, basely.

Remington smiled.

"Yes, I have come back," he said, "on business."

Katharine looked around at the quiet hamlet, with its dozen cottages, its peaceful, bovine inhabitants, and then at Paul.

They both laughed. Katharine could laugh now. She felt strangely light-hearted. A sudden weight seemed, somehow, to have been raised from off her life. Nothing mattered much now. Paul was with her. They had gone back to the old days of mutual understanding and affinity. As for Paul, he was content, as a man is once in a lifetime.

"I hope that your business is a pleasant one," said Katharine demurely.

"That is for you to decide," said Paul.

They began to walk along together. Neither spoke. It was the silence that comes not between lovers, but — which unites them.

"Katharine," Paul said, "I have come to tell you a story; — it is not very long. Will you listen to it?"

"Yes," said Katharine quietly. They had

reached the fallen trunk of a tree; Katharine sat down, Paul lay at her feet. His brown eyes were fixed very earnestly upon her face. Katharine was thinking of that first story he had told her in the early days of their acquaintance. He had said then that he could read her heart. Paul did not at once begin. Suddenly, like a flash of light, came a question. Did he know? Had he heard? He thought her so good, — so good. He could not know, and now she must be the one to tell him. She had lost so much; must she lose now, by her own act, even a chance of happiness? But to let him speak, ignorantly, without knowing what manner of woman she was!

“Katharine,” Paul began; but she stopped him with a gesture.

“Wait,” she said breathlessly, “I must tell you my story first.” There was a little break in her voice, but she went on bravely.

“I want you to know everything, — everything. You have heard, perhaps, that I married for money” — She paused for a moment.

"Yes," said Paul slowly, "but you do not suppose that I believed it?"

Katharine pressed her hands tightly together.

"It is true," she said.

There was a moment's silence.

"But I want you to know how it was done. It was not right; but I was tempted, — tempted so sorely, and I was very young." She went on in a low, far-away voice. Paul noticed even then, with a sort of surprise, how sweet and resonant were its tones.

"It is true," Katharine said, "but I would like you to understand it. You have been so truly a friend to me, and I have so few friends. You have never known what it is to hunger and yearn after all that is good and refined and high in life. You cannot imagine existence without companionship, without books, without pictures, without the thousand and one things that appeal to all that is in you of the love of the beautiful — and money means all that. My mother married beneath her; she loved luxury and refinement, but she

gave them up, and I think her whole life was passed in a sort of useless regret. Do you wonder that, with the fallacy of love and poverty before my eyes, with all the longing for a beautiful world, the world that she had left, which I had never known, but of which she told me, — do you wonder that, when she died, I still longed — tenfold, I famished — for the things that were not mine ?

“There was then no one with whom I was in sympathy. I loved my father. He was very good and true, but he did not understand my hopes and dreams. Perhaps he was above such things : they were very human longings. When Colonel Desmond offered me all for which I had wished and hungered, do you wonder that I accepted him ? It was like the first sight of the ocean, the first breath of sea air. And if I did not love him, I did not deceive him. He was willing to take me without love, and I was grateful to him. When he died, I felt truly sorry. He had been so kind to me, and I had never given him, could not

have given him, the only thing that he wanted in payment — my love. That is my defence. I do not think that I chose the best. I know that there are higher things than any wealth can buy. I was not true to what was best in me. But I want you to understand me, if you can, and make excuses for me” — She stopped abruptly.

“You are wondering why I tell you all this.”

Remington felt a great pity for this woman — so young and so beautiful. She must have suffered very deeply. He took both her hands in his.

“Katharine,” he said.

Her eyes filled with tears. Her heart beat thickly, rapidly. •

“Katharine,” Paul said again, “you do not need for me to tell you that I love you. Give me the right to love you, to stand between you and sorrow — forevermore. Answer me, Katharine.”

She raised her eyes and looked at him. He was hers, then. The happiness of it was break-

ing her heart. Could this beautiful new thing be true, and in the face of all she had told him? Had it really happened to her — Katharine?

“My love,” she said, softly and reverently, “my love.”

CHAPTER XI.

KATHARINE had returned to Paris, whence Remington had preceded her. Paul was not a very patient lover ; he had counted on an immediate marriage, but Katharine had demurred.

“I want a little time — if only a little,” she said, “in which to collect my scattered thoughts and — my trousseau.”

“You have no sentiment,” said Paul, “none at all ; and, what is worse, no realization of dramatic effect. Can’t you see that a lasting name is being offered to us ? Married here, in the village, we shall immediately become hero and heroine of a delightful pastoral romance. Katharine, you are one of those personages who have fame thrust upon them, and you — refuse. Think of the easy notoriety that you might achieve, and of the knowledge that our story

would be handed down through long generations, and crooned to all the babies of the district while still in their cradles."

"It is a delightful picture," said Katharine, "but it fails to move me." And so it was that Remington was forced to content himself with a promise of marriage very early indeed in the ensuing winter.

In this delay Katharine was actuated by several motives. She did really, as she had said; want time to collect her thoughts. Her happiness was so great, so overwhelming, that she wanted time to breathe, to grow accustomed to its face and presence. Then Miss Trecartin was to leave her. She had been faithful to Katharine; now she could go home unpursued by a remorseful conscience, and she was very homesick. There was a very strong regret at leaving Katharine, — wilful, unregenerate, lovable Katharine; but she had made up her mind that she would still see her sometimes, if she had to cross the ocean, alone and unprotected, to do it. She delivered two parting lectures; one to Paul, and one to Katharine.

"Marriage is a very solemn thing," she said to Katharine. "I hope that you are about to enter upon it with a becoming spirit; and remember, Katharine, that many a devoted husband's affection has been lost by such small things as forgetting to sew on buttons. Remember, Katharine, to sew on Mr. Remington's buttons."

To Paul she said seriously, "You must not expect too much from Mrs. Desmond. She is very lovable, but she really cannot cook very well: in fact, I do not think that any one *could* eat Katharine's pies; and she is apt to forget some of the most important things, such as yeast in making bread; and she likes to try all sorts of experiments." This was the result of a dinner that Katharine had achieved at one time, and to which she had proudly invited Miss Trecartin. It had left an impression on that good lady's mind that would, in all probability, never be effaced.

"That is a serious defect in my future wife," Paul had answered gravely. "I wish that I

had known it before ; but of course now"—with a deep sigh, "it is too late to change matters ;" his remark necessarily reducing Miss Trecartin to the lowest depths of despair.

This had been before their arrival in Paris. Now they were back again, and the engagement had burst upon their little world. It affected various people in different ways. Lady Charteris heard it, with a mingling of content and resignation. Now that her dream of her brother's marriage with Gladys Ferrier had been irrevocably shattered, she was willing to open her eyes to Katharine's beauty and charm of manner, knowing her brother, and being wise in her generation. The Marquis de Beauprès on hearing it said little. He was a man who did not relinquish a cherished project when there was even a forlorn hope to be led ; and, besides, he did not know Katharine, and he did not believe in love. A title pleased most women, and he was not the man to shrink from pressing any advantage. Decidedly he could wait.

But there was no one perhaps, that the news

reached, who received it as did the Contessa Caroni, Paul's old love. There had been passages between the two that would have made her reception of the news interesting to any student of character who knew these episodes of the attachment. The voluble French maid had mentioned the engagement as an item among the other gossip with which she habitually regaled her mistress; but she had not reckoned on the effect. It was like putting a spark to gunpowder. The contessa had started up, perfectly livid with fury.

"That man, that man," she gasped, "idiot, fool that thou art! Dost thou know what thou art saying?" The maid had shrunk away, trembling, before the gust of passion. She knew enough of her mistress to fear her wrath. The contessa walked swiftly up and down the room, like an enraged lioness; and the maid, watching her chance, slipped quietly out. The contessa did not notice her departure.

This man, then, had dared to loved another woman; and she had waited so patiently, feel-

ing sure that he would return to her. He was proud, Paul Remington, but he had come back before; and now that chattering, insentient, unreasoning maid had told her another story. But he should not shake off her fetters with impunity — this man who had once loved her. By degrees she became calmer; there was an evil smile playing around her mouth when she rang for her maid, and the shrinking, trembling girl had come. There was no more gossip that day; the girl performed her task silently and tremulously, anxious to please. The contessa had already forgotten her. She was busy devising schemes in her fertile brain that boded Paul and Katharine no good. The contessa had known, of course, of Paul's attention to Katharine; but, with the vanity possible to a woman, she had concluded that it was in reality a tribute to herself. Paul was trying to make her jealous — she had intended before long to be jealous — but now, now she saw her mistake, her strange blindness: all this time he had forgotten her.

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Katharine often thought of the earlier days of her friendship with Paul. She remembered how she had begun to first look forward to Remington's visits, and then to feel defrauded if he did not come. She had found Paul singularly adaptive to her moods: she had felt almost sure that he liked her, else why had he come? But he had never wearied her with any expression of his sentiments, save that which his constant attendance had conveyed. She had half wished, many a time, that he would show that her presence was essential to his enjoyment. It had piqued her that he should seem indifferent, but the very novelty of this apparent indifference had been a most powerful attraction for her. Katharine realized that now. It had been a concession for her to wait for anything like an advance on his part; but she knew now that, unconsciously, she had been so waiting.

As for Remington, he knew now that he had long ago acknowledged Katharine's influence. She had alternately attracted and repelled him.

She had exercised such a strong fascination for him, when in her presence, that he felt when in her company that no other woman could ever be anything to him again. Away from her had come the rebound ; she had puzzled him ; she had as many facets as a diamond, — he had never found her exactly the same.

Could such a woman love ? He had seen that his indifference piqued her ; but that, he had reflected, was as much a sign of wounded vanity as of any affection for him personally. He had told himself that he was not such an ass as to imagine a woman like Katharine to be secretly pining for him. The idea had startled him. The very possibility of being loved by such a woman had dazzled his inner sense. So he had waited. He had gone to see her often, and he had found himself, as of old, always charmed, always a little puzzled. He reflected, with a sort of contemptuous pity, on his younger days, when a woman like the Contessa Caroni could have inspired him with any feeling stronger than disdain. How vapid

were they, how apparent their artifice, how meaningless their sympathy.

The comparison had been dangerous to his own peace of mind. He had found it harder than before to preserve his old manner with Katharine; the question of pleasing her had become all-important. It was the first step to a very deep and abiding love — the love that when it is sincere is perhaps the highest honor for any woman to receive; the love of a man knowing the world, not easily carried away by fancy, discriminating between good and evil; yet, withal, more passionate, more lasting by its very nature, than that of any ardent, unthinking youth, intoxicated with the unaccustomed delight of a first kiss. There is love and love. We in modern times seem to have lost the true love-making. Civilization stifles it, society discourages it. Emotion of any violent kind is bad form. Let us have love by all means, wise, gentle, convenient love. Fire is a good thing on the domestic hearth; the fire of the volcano is hurtful. He is a fool in these com-

fortable times who would lose his all for love, esteeming it as nothing; but there are still under heaven a few such fools, and to them it is given to know, if great pain, great joy likewise; and they who have seen the glory on the heights, and have come back with some of the light on their faces, can tell the tale better than we in the valley below.

Katharine knew it, and Remington knew it — in a less degree. One must have a pure heart to see visions, and a good woman's heart is purer than a man's.

The Marquis de Beauprès was a discordant element in the harmony of the new relations. Katharine liked him well enough. What woman would not like the companionship of a man never intrusive, always willing to please, always respectful, silent, when silence was wanted, gay with the gay, a close observer of moods, and a good follower of their leadings? Katharine was woman enough to enjoy Remington's disapproval when she favored the marquis, and she felt quite easy on the score

of the marquis herself. He had won her confidence, she felt safe with him. She did not believe in the possibility of firing a block of ice ; and she relied, perhaps, too much on her own power to check his advances. She was willing to take something for granted. It would have been more vital to her to know the exact truth if she had cared for the man ; as she did not, it was the privilege of her beauty to take what she wished to know for reality. Love is proverbially blind, if not to itself, to others ; and in their case it sometimes puts the bandage on its own eyes. If there is a good deal of the angel in a woman, there is, besides, a good deal of human nature ; and Katharine, though she loved, was not all angel.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN two people of strong wills, and strong likes and dislikes, come together in any very close relation, the result is easily predicted. It does not take any deep knowledge of human nature to foresee occasional differences of opinion in which one or the other must yield. Now Katharine and Paul, though they loved one another, were no exception to the general rule. It was a small matter, seemingly, to have caused any discordance, and one not at all complex in nature.

Katharine had refused to meet the contessa; she ignored the latter's advances, and, essentially for a woman's reason, she disliked the brilliant, plausible Frenchwoman; she had heard something of the story of Paul's attachment, and the contessa was a continual reminder of what she wanted altogether to for-

get. She was not afraid of her future influence, because she believed the contessa's influence over Paul to be a thing of the past; but she did not care to revive troublesome thoughts, and she did not like the contessa herself. Now the contessa was affected differently. She was curious to see what manner of woman it was who had turned away her lover's allegiance; she hated Katharine cordially, but where she hated she instinctively tried to conceal; and she had, besides, a keen eye for effect. The world would doubtless declare her jealous; an open, evident friendship with the woman who had wronged her would stop slanderous tongues. So the contessa argued, and her reasoning had been accurate enough. She had merely forgotten Katharine as an important factor; and when Katharine had politely, but studiously, ignored her first advances, the contessa had hardly believed the evidence of her senses. There was incredulous surprise, and then swift conviction. She was not a woman to be treated lightly, and her love for Katharine was not

thereby increased. She waited patiently for her turn. She was prepared to give good measure.

Remington had noticed something of all this, and it had jarred upon his sense of the fitness of things. That the contessa had a certain standing in the social world, and that the standing was recognized, despite the covert sneers and whispers associated with her name, seemed to Paul sufficient reason for observance, at least, of common courtesy, in her regard. Now Katharine was not discourteous, she was merely passive. She had taken her position without very much thought, but Paul's evident disapproval had strengthened her resolve. She did not like his interference. The contessa, she argued, was nothing to Paul; why should he trouble about her now? Remington's view was more impersonal. He had a good deal of contempt in his feeling for the contessa, but he was anxious that Katharine should be as perfect in matters of form as in every other way. He regarded her present course as a social solecism.

He did not wish the watchful eyes of his sister to perceive it and have her think likewise. The matter was not of much importance, but Remington had a certain vein of obstinacy. Katharine knew his wish; she ought to yield to it. He had spoken to her on the subject once. Now he approached it again.

"The Contessa Caroni goes to many of the receptions which you attend," he said. "Do you see much of her?"

"No," said Katharine.

"She is an interesting woman, in a way," said Paul diplomatically.

"Yes," said Katharine indifferently.

Paul began to follow the winding of the pattern in the carpet with interested eyes.

"This is a pretty room," he said at length. "And as I was saying about the contessa, she has a good deal of taste. She has rather pretty rooms herself, I — that is — I believe so. She — one ought to hide one's dislikes in a measure; don't you think so, Katharine?"

"I don't know," said Katharine. She looked

at Paul for a moment. "You seem considerably interested in the — contessa," she added with an effort.

"I hate the woman!" said Paul impetuously, "but I think that — well, one should be ordinarily civil, you know."

"True."

"And if, for instance, you did not quite so pointedly ignore her advances, it would be a matter of obligation to me."

"And why should it oblige you?"

"For many reasons. The social world accepts her. I think that you should follow its leadings."

"I do not choose," said Katharine.

"It is a matter of good taste," began Paul.

"It is a matter of principle," said Katharine.

Remington walked to the window and looked out.

Katharine took up some embroidery and began to sew. Neither spoke for a moment.

Then Paul began again from his new vantage ground.

"You won't do this thing, then, to please me?"

Katharine did not answer.

Paul went on quickly.

"I do not like to have my future wife made remarkable by her non-observance of even the minor points of etiquette, of good form. And in this — I think that you should be guided by me, Katharine."

Katharine threw down her work, with a quick gesture of despair.

"You men," she said, half-laughing, half-scornfully, "how little you know of women! Don't you know, Paul, that you are making me momentarily detest that woman more and more? Meet her, be civil to her, make much of her, you say, and why?"

"Because I wish it, — because it would be such an obligation to *me*, — because' — oh, Paul" —

She laughed, almost in spite of herself, but presently became grave again.

"No, Paul, once and for all, I will not meet

her. I will not force myself into anything more than a most Christian love for her; and that, you know," she added, half-smiling, "will allow me considerable lee-way."

Remington was angry.

"In that case I have only to say good-evening. Perhaps when you think it over" —

Katharine shook her head. Paul turned stiffly. "Good-night, Katharine," he said coldly.

There was no answer. He had reached the door when he heard "Paul" spoken softly. He hesitated for a moment, then turned.

Katharine was still seated; her face was hidden in her hands. Remington felt a twinge of remorse. He came back and stood near her.

"You will go and see the contessa?" he asked. But Katharine saw signs of relenting. She laid her hand persuasively on his arm.

"You are sorry you were angry with me?" she asked reproachfully. There was a mistiness in her eyes that was fast approaching tears. "But I don't believe that you are. I don't believe

that you love me," she added, with a pathetic little sob.

"My angel," said Remington, surrendering at discretion. He was fast becoming a monster in his own eyes.

"And you won't ask me — to meet — that horrid contessa?"

"You shall do just as you like," said Remington weakly.

Katharine's sobs grew fainter. She gave a heavenly smile of content. Presently they stopped altogether. She ran her fingers through Paul's short, close-cropped hair.

"You have a beautiful head," she said reflectively. "You look like a modern Apollo; except when you frown, and then you are ugly, dreadfully ugly, and it makes such a horrid line between your eyebrows."

Remington laughed.

"And that means that I must always do exactly as you wish; I foresee a life of misery before me."

Katharine smiled.

"That will depend altogether on yourself," she said irreverently.

After he had left her, Paul felt dimly that his first effort at mastery had been a failure, but the thought did not depress him as much as a victory would have done. He felt confident that another time the battle would be his. He must be firm, quite firm, but kind as well. He had frightened her to-day. What a slight, frail thing she was. He must be more careful, and — another time she would do what he wished. Poor little Katharine!

CHAPTER XIII.

ROUGET had been away on a sketching tour, but Katharine's engagement had met him on his return. He fled precipitately to her. He would believe the truth from the lips of no one else. As it happened, Katharine was busy, and asked Miss Trecartin to entertain her visitor until she could come. When at last she arrived, she could not help pausing amusedly at the door of the *salon*.

The little artist had not caught sight of her; —he was gesticulating violently, and talking rapidly. Miss Trecartin was slowly retreating before him. She was perfectly assured that Rouget was insane; she devoted all her energies to keeping him at bay with a stony glare. She was exemplifying the power of the human eye. Rouget caught sight of Katharine. The accumulating flow of eloquence reached its

climax. He rushed towards her, beseeching, lamenting, inquiring—all in a breath. Miss Trecartin wrung her hands. Was Katharine then to be massacred before her eyes?

The new danger roused in her latent powers of strategy. She cautiously approached the bell. In another instant Katharine would be safe. At that moment Katharine, turning, perceived her companion's attempt.

"Janet!" she said, as gravely as was possible under the circumstances, "Janet!"

To Miss Trecartin's frenzied imagination, Katharine's exclamation sounded like an appeal for help. The bell rang violently. "You are saved!" she gasped, with considerable dramatic force. Katharine's laughter could be restrained no longer. She sent the servant who appeared, on some unimportant errand, in search for her handkerchief. "Miss Trecartin will show you where to find it."

Miss Trecartin looked at Katharine.

"How can I leave you?" she said breathlessly. "And in danger!"

The words were spoken in English. Rouget's supplications had ceased for the moment.

"Yes, go, please," said Katharine, "I must speak to him. You may remain within call if you wish."

Miss Trecartin hesitated. She glanced at the artist, who was now standing silent and dejectedly motionless.

"Very well," she said at length; "but be careful, Katharine. I will remain within call."

"*Femme incroyable*," murmured the little artist, as he watched her retreating figure. He turned to Katharine.

"Is it true?" he said, without preface. "Is it indeed true, that you are engaged to this Monsieur Paul Remington — this Englishman? But no, I will not believe it."

"It is quite true," said Katharine. "You have come to congratulate me?" She seated herself as she spoke. Rouget came nearer. His face had undergone a change. He looked steadily and mournfully at Katharine. "I am wounded, — and to the heart," he said slowly.

For the first time his manner impressed Katharine as being serious.

"I am very sorry," she said gently. "We have been such good friends. I hope that we shall yet be so."

"It is impossible," said the little artist.

"Tell me," he added suddenly, "Monsieur Remington is rich, it is true — he is well-placed, it is true ; but I, madame, am an artist ; I shall one day be famous. I will grow rich for your sake. When I am rich and famous, will you say yes to me ? I will toil, I will struggle ; ah, madame, believe me, — I will succeed."

"I can give you no such hope," said Katharine steadily. "Be reasonable, Monsieur Rouget." She held out her hand to him frankly. "We are still good friends ?" she said.

Rouget overlooked the proffered hand. "You do not believe me," he said miserably. "But I swear to you that what I say is true. I have already a commission from Madame la Duchesse de L—. I will paint such a picture as this age has not seen. You inspire me. The fire

burns in my veins. Wait but a year. I shall be richer than your Englishman."

"That would make no difference," said Katharine. "Were you both rich and famous I would still not marry you." A beautiful glow came over her face.

"Do you not understand?" she said. "I love him; nothing would ever make any difference."

Rouget moaned. The new light on her face had been more convincing than any argument, but he still held blindly to his theory; it was his one hope.

"If you would but believe me," he said; "and I, too, love you."

Katharine felt a great pity for him. She believed that the hurt would soon heal, but she knew that at that moment he was suffering.

"I am very sorry," she said again. "You must try to forget me."

"I will forget you," said Rouget quietly, and with a strange smile,—"in death." He turned to go. The next moment he had come back again. He seized her hand, and covered it with kisses.

"Good-by," he said, "good-by." In an instant he had gone.

There were tears in Katharine's eyes. This new manner affected her more than she could have believed. She had never taken Rouget seriously, but something now told her that he had really loved her. Remington came later.

"You are very quiet, Katharine," he said.

"I was thinking," said Katharine. In a moment her old brightness had come back; but, in spite of herself, a vague uneasiness remained. Rouget's words haunted her. "And I, too, love you," he had said. She sighed half-consciously. Remington found her somewhat abstracted.

"What is the matter to-night?" he asked at last.

"The matter?" said Katharine slowly. "I hardly know. I feel, perhaps, undeservedly happy; and I feel as if—as if I had been torturing a butterfly."

She shivered a little.

"You are growing tired," said Paul. He was puzzled by the expression, and he after-

wards remembered it. Now he was occupied in making Katharine forget anything that troubled her.

"You need looking after," he said; "and, on my honor, I won't wait much longer. When are you going to marry me, Katharine?"

Katharine shook her head.

"Don't talk of it to-night, Paul," she said, "not to-night."

"But you never will talk of it," said Paul discontentedly: "when are you going to fulfil your promise? Don't you love me, Katharine?"

Katharine looked at him earnestly.

"Love you, Paul?" she said. "If you could only know how much! That is what troubles me. I am not so good as you think me, Paul. I am afraid of your finding me out. Marriage is such a solemn thing. What if you should weary of me, Paul? It would break my heart."

She hid her face in her hands.

"Katharine," said Paul, "you are tired and distressed to-night, or you could never think

such thoughts. Don't you know that you are the very breath of my being ; that the thought of you is so tangled up with my very heart-strings that whatever you might do I should always love you ? ”

“ But suppose you found me different from what you thought ? Suppose you married another Katharine from the one that you love ? ” She spoke with a strange satisfaction in inflicting pain upon herself, and on him, by her words.

Remington took her hands between his own.

“ My love,” he said very gravely, “ you must not torture yourself with such thoughts. I am not such a good man as I would wish now, to have the life and love of such a dear little wife in my keeping ; but, before God, Katharine, I will always love you. And there is no perfect love without trust. You must trust me, Katharine.”

“ I will trust you, Paul,” she said slowly, “ and I will try to be a better woman for your sake.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE trivialities of life are the things which make up the sum of existence. One does not experience great emotions, violent love or hate, at every turning. There are, perhaps, one or two crises during life ; but to most, the current flows calmly, evenly.

The people who feel intensely are not many. That is the reason why there are not more noble heart-stirring deeds done in the world. Heroes do not flourish commonly. The body's needs are so numerous and imperative that the wants of the soul are well-nigh forgotten. The visible jostles the invisible, the material usurps the throne of the spiritual. And so one goes on, and the mental vision becomes distorted. Trifles become all-important ; petty discords, petty strifes, unworthy pleasures. Safe, comfortable, vegetable creatures, with no

deep miseries, no great happiness — such is your life.

Civilization is a grand thing, a good thing; and true gold rings truly always; but one is tempted to think that for great possibilities one must look back to the old barbaric days, when people loved, not conventionally, and hated, not politely.

But even in this, the nineteenth century, in the very centre of refined and cultured Paris, was a storm raging equal to any that ever had place in the breast of any passion-rocked daughter of other time.

The contessa, having heard of Paul's engagement, accepted the fact, and watched carefully the development of affairs. It was fortunate that a thousand laws and distinctions confined her; she must work quietly for her revenge; there were shorter ways out of the difficulty, but they were means unfortunately forbidden to her use. Nevertheless, she was not quite without resource, and she waited. She thirsted for power to punish the man who had once

loved her, and who had now transferred to another woman the love that she claimed as her own. She wanted to punish Katharine also; to see her suffer, to see her, if possible, fall. To hurt her was to hurt Paul. The Marquis de Beauprès had appealed to her as a fitting tool for the work she had laid down for herself. She had a keen sense of dramatic effect, but she was practical in its application. The bond that was to unite herself and the marquis was to be one of common interest. It was the only bond that she believed in or recognized. She knew her man thoroughly, and she knew not a little of his position. That was a help, and she did not have to trouble much about the opportunity. It was made easily; fate gave her the chance of a *tête-à-tête* with the marquis. It was not long before she began to sound him with regard to Katharine. She had played so long and so skilfully on the emotions of men, that the marquis was as wax in her hands. She let him flatter himself that he was finding

her out; and she made him believe that he it was who was engaging her in his own interests.

"Come, let us be frank, *mon ami*," the contessa had said with well-done *bouhomie*. "You love Madame Desmond. You despair. You believe that she is lost to you. I come, and I bid you to hope."

"You do not know her," said the marquis, "you undervalue the strength of her love for that man — that Remington."

"Perhaps so; but I know him. Do not be afraid, only leave it to me. You see that I am interested in you. I will help you, and I can."

"And your motive?" said the marquis curiously.

"Are you not satisfied with the one I have given you? Let us say, then, that it is a fancy; that I must amuse myself" — she stopped impatiently. "But if you say that, you will be wrong" — She lost her self-control for a moment.

"That man *loved* me," she said in low, smoth-

ered tones, "loved me. Now do you understand?"

The marquis retreated before the leaping up of the flame of her smouldering passion. He knew enough of the contessa to be afraid of her. He desired to propitiate her.

"It is impossible," he murmured eagerly. "To love you, is to love you always."

The contessa had a weak spot in her armor — she was sensible to flattery. She sighed with all the impulsive sentiment of a school-girl. The marquis followed up his advantage.

"You think, then, that you can manage the Englishman?" he said deferentially. "Do you think that you will succeed?"

"I am sure of it," said the contessa; "and you, for your part, must not let Madame Desmond forget you. Continue to see her. Make yourself agreeable to her. Excite his jealousy. It will be my task to make that a possibility."

The marquis kissed her hand gratefully.

"You are my protecting angel," he said fervently. The contessa smiled, but not iron

ically. The inconsistency of the remark did not strike her. She was well pleased with the result of her *tête-à-tête*, and was less imperious with her maid, and easier to suit, in consequence. She even smiled amiably upon her husband in the exuberance of her joy. It was a waste of time, perhaps, but that was a fault of which she was seldom guilty. It did not augur well for Remington's peace of mind when the contessa was so well pleased.

The Marquis de Beauprès had left the contessa with mingled feelings. He was conscious of several new sensations, together with a certain relief on finding himself again alone. The contessa was too much for him. He felt like a mouse that has been played with by a cat, and that has escaped temporarily. To be sure, he had been gently dealt with, tossed and patted by only velvet paws ; but he knew that the claws were there, and the knowledge had not been soothing. Still, the effect of the interview had been to give him a glimmer of hope. Katharine's marriage would indeed crush every rose-

colored dream, every vision of the to-morrow ; but, meanwhile, who could tell what might happen ?

The idea, having once taken root, grew rapidly. He had necessarily judged Katharine from the women he had known, and in that light his past silence looked like the height of folly. What woman but was capricious ? What woman but what must be wooed, perforce, at times against her will ? He constructed a new theory : Katharine had been piqued by his silence ; her vanity had been wounded ; he saw it all. And then there was the title. But he would go now and plead his cause ; he would show her the immense superiority of Emil Joseph de Beauprès. He would utterly defeat, rout, and trample upon this Englishman, his unworthy rival ; and Katharine, beautiful Katharine, would be his.

Katharine received him kindly.

“ You have come to congratulate me ? ” she said. “ That is very kind of you. I treasure up all my good wishes. I am becoming very

avaricious. I hoard all the greetings of my friends."

"And you will let me be your friend?" said the marquis, in a low voice.

"Why not?" Katharine asked carelessly; she looked up inquiringly, the marquis thought reproachfully. To gain or lose all by a single blow? The moment had come.

"Why not?" he said, as calmly as he might. "I tried to tell you that once, madame. You would not listen. Can love take on the mask of friendship?" He had declared himself, and, as he flattered himself, with all the impetuosity of youthful enthusiasm. The color came to Katharine's face.

"You forget, monsieur," she said simply. "I am engaged to Paul Remington."

To her it was a most cruel insult. She was avowedly Paul's now, and yet this man had dared —

The marquis made a fatal mistake. His head was a little turned; he regarded her composure as an invitation to proceed.

"And what of that," he said rashly, "when I love you? Love is stronger than all else. I will fight with him and kill him. You shall be mine, my beautiful Katharine." He came a step nearer. Katharine looked at him with indescribable horror and loathing.

"Keep back," she said, in a low, intense tone. The marquis retreated involuntarily. He was not used to tremble before the displeasure of any woman, but Katharine's dangerously quiet anger was new to him. Perhaps, after all, she loved this man — this Remington. He must retrieve his mistake, and soon, or the possibility of doing so would pass from him. He divined that flattery would not appease a woman of this stamp. He drew back with ultra respectful manner.

"I was wrong," he said slowly, as if the conviction of his unworthiness was being forced upon him. "I forgot myself. Your beauty dazzled me."

Katharine's face was stern. She did not speak.

"I am most miserable," said the marquis. "I entreat you to forgive me. I am the most unhappy of men. I have no right to beg you to overlook this insanity — this indiscretion."

Katharine caught at the word.

"It was insanity!" she said quickly. "Tell me that you did not know what you were saying — that you did not mean it."

The marquis hesitated, but he saw that Katharine was in no mood to be trifled with longer.

"You are right," he said; "it was all a mistake. You will forgive me?"

Katharine believed him. His humility touched her, and she was loath to think evil of others. She attributed his former wild declaration to his fiery French blood. With an Englishman, the thing would have been impossible; but to treat a mad impulse seriously — it was unreasoning.

"I forgive you," she said frankly, "but I think that you will agree with me that it would be better for us both that our acquaintance should cease — in so much as is possible."

"I understand you," said the marquis. "I will not intrude again upon you." He was, however, thinking rapidly. She could not in the future altogether overlook him. Time would soften her anger. She had been easily appeased this time—perhaps the next—. It was characteristic of the man to misinterpret her generosity. There was the long habit of years apparent when he next spoke.

"You may trust me," he said; "you shall never repent of your kindness. I will not now trespass upon your patience longer." He bowed respectfully and withdrew. Remington was coming in. The marquis had decided on his course, but it was very bitter to him to leave Katharine with Paul. He had made a great mistake, which it would take long to repair. He must set about it at once; but he had still a sort of savage reliance on the countess's estimate of Katharine and Paul. Remington bowed to the marquis and smiled at Katharine, with all a lover's disregard of other people.

"The Marquis de Beauprès is just going," Katharine said. The subdued ring of joy in her voice at Paul's arrival did not escape the ear of the marquis, but he made no sign. In a moment he had gone.

Remington looked approvingly after him. The swift removal of the objectionable third person is always commendable in the eyes of lovers. But there was for the first time a certain restraint between them. Katharine felt that she was concealing something. She did not speak of the marquis, though he was uppermost in her mind. Paul would never understand, and such things were best forgotten. She made strenuous efforts to appear naturally. Remington drew her down beside him on a seat.

"Well, little woman," he said confidently, "what have you been doing since I saw you?"

"If you will stop to reflect that you saw me early this morning, your question will answer itself," she said. "What could I have been doing but trying to make stupid people believe

themselves entertaining ; and cross people, amiable ; and bored people, for once, pleased with themselves and with others. And in that you never help me. You expected me to say, with all the conceit of your kind, that I had been spending my precious time thinking of you, and waiting for you to appear. Confess it ? ”

“ I think that the answer would have been justified under the circumstances,” said Paul, with fine audacity.

“ You are too sure of yourself, monsieur. I have not had you in strong relief in my thoughts but twice,” said Katharine.

“ And that was when ? ” —

“ When I wanted you to write a stupid business letter for me ; and another time ” — hastily ; “ and once when my new bonnet came home, and I wanted to know if it was becoming.”

“ Marvellous arithmetic,” said Paul. “ Then you regard me altogether in the light of a disagreeable but extremely necessary appendage to your household ? ”

“ Yes, altogether,” said Katharine coolly.

"But that is rank heresy," said Paul, with commendable sternness. "You must be taught better. Only wait until I assume my rightful position of lord and master."

"Perhaps you are the one who must wait," said Katharine.

Remington looked down upon her from his height of six feet with pronounced severity.

"You are not afraid of me?" he inquired.

"Not the least in the world," said Katharine comfortably. She was beginning to feel herself once more. The marquis was altogether forgotten.

Paul caught her up in his arms.

"You are quite at my mercy," he said. "You must submit gracefully to all my exactions. What will you do, if I put you down?"

"I will — try on — my new bonnet," after a pause.

"And what else?"

"I can't think of anything else in this altitude. Put me down, Paul, at once."

Remington did so, with an amused sense of his own promptness in obedience.

"Now go and find your bonnet," he said.

"I don't know that I will ; you have behaved very badly."

"You promised," said Paul.

"Under compulsion. That doesn't count." She waited a moment for his horrified comprehension of her code of honor.

"Don't be so appalled," she said. "I am going, but it is not altogether virtue on my part. I perceive a lecture from afar, and take my choice of evils."

She stopped for an instant in the doorway.

"Were you ever in love with any one before you met me?" she asked.

"With thousands," Paul said shamelessly. Katharine seemed satisfied ; the prompt avowal had amused her. She went thoughtfully upstairs. She was so long away that Paul grew impatient. The time that a woman takes to put on a bonnet has always been a problem to the masculine mind. But presently Katharine appeared, and Paul felt repaid for the interval. She was dressed to go out, — the bewitching combina-

tion of tulle and rosebuds on her head, an opera cloak on her arm.

"Do I look rather nice?" she asked artfully.

Remington found it necessary to look at her from all points of view before declaring himself satisfied.

"Then take me to the theatre," said Katharine unblushingly. At which the unreasoning enthusiasm of an infatuated lover overcame Remington, somewhat to the detriment of the tulle bonnet; which, indeed, only the timely presence of the dignified landlady sufficed to save from destruction.

CHAPTER XV.

KATHARINE and Paul were married. It was like a dream to Katharine, the quiet wedding, the solemn vows, Miss Trecartin's tears and good wishes, her leave-taking, and then herself alone with Paul — her husband. The old Katharine was left far behind her; she was entering now her new life. Only one little unimportant incident had impressed itself on her memory. She had given the little gamin at the church-door a gold piece. He had said, "God bless your pretty face, madame, and give you joy."

"Are you not rather reckless in your dispensation of charities?" Paul had asked, smiling. He did not understand. She wanted every one to be as happy as she was; and, besides, the little street urchin's not, perhaps, altogether disinterested greeting had been the first wish

that had met her. She took it for an omen of the future ; although what need of omens with her strong, beautiful husband to protect and care for her ?

They were very unfashionable, these two, in their love for each other. It was somewhat a novel view of matrimony to the world about them, the view these two seemed to take. Surprising indeed, but nevertheless true ; they actually appeared to wish to be alone together. After their marriage, Remington and Katharine had spent a short month's honeymoon in Rome. At their return, it was to be expected that they would follow the example of those around them : that Katharine, namely, should settle down into a sort of bored possession of her husband ; and that Remington should spend his life at his club, appearing occasionally with his wife, but regarding her with nothing of a lover-like enthusiasm. There was, then, a little ripple of surprise, not unmixed with unbelief, when Remington still openly displayed his infatuation for his wife ; and when Katharine



seemed to find no other company so desirable as her husband's. But the opinion of outsiders was not regarded as important by this extraordinary pair of lovers. They left society to shrug its shoulders, and remark that this state of things could not, by its very nature, last long. They laughed at prophecy and defied fate. Katharine had decided to stay a month or two longer in Paris, before going to England and to Paul's estate.

"I want to have you, for a while, all to myself," she said. "I don't want to share you just yet with any one or anything. Cannot your business and your friends wait a little?" And Remington had readily agreed to her project. Her desire seemed very natural to him. He sent word to his agent at his old home that it should be swept, and garnished, and made beautiful for his wife's reception. He had drawn a very vivid picture of it all for Katharine's imagining.

"I think that you will be proud of the old place," he said, "and grow very fond of it. It

is a real English estate, and you will govern it right royally. I can see you now with my tenants. They will all be wild over you."

"You think too much of me," said Katharine. "Perhaps I shall not be a success, though I shall try very hard — for your sake."

"You won't have to try," said Paul lightly. "It comes naturally to you to make people like you."

"Still, I am afraid that I shall have to try, with your sister," said Katharine.

Remington flushed, then he laughed.

"Alice is not so terrible as she appears," he said. "She has a very warm heart underneath all that fashionable reserve of manner."

"And I shall find it," said Katharine cheerfully. "I know that she considers me a wild Westerner, but wait — I can be a very grand lady when I choose. See," and she swept across the room with all the dignity of a duchess, and seated herself again with languid grace. Her expression of amiable *ennui* was inimitable. Remington caught her in his arms, dignity and all.

"Sir, you forget yourself," she said icily; and then they both laughed, with all the fatuous merriment of lovers.

"That will take her by storm," Paul said with conviction. "Alice's frigidity is nowhere beside your chilly reserve. I do believe that you will impose upon her with it all."

"And Americans are the fashion in London," said Katharine. "Don't be afraid; I shall do you credit."

"As if I could ever think anything else," said Paul reproachfully.

"You have never told me much about your people," said Katharine. "Tell me now."

"I have no near relatives but Alice," said Paul. "My mother and father both died when I was a little chap; and I have led something of a roving life since I came of age. The estate, however, has managed very well without me. I used to go there occasionally in the hunting season. By the way, can you ride horseback?"

"Like a centaur, a seraph. I probably ride much better than do you."

"We shall see," said Paul doubtfully : "I ride very remarkably well myself," whereat they both indulge in merriment again.

It is not very exciting, these long talks together. There was hardly a woman of Katharine's acquaintance who would not have been decidedly bored by an oft-recurring *tête-à-tête* with her husband ; but to Katharine it was the most exquisite happiness. In the after days she remembered that.

There was perfect sympathy between herself and her husband ; and, again, she was not like other women. Paul was all she had : he took the place of father, mother, brethren, friends. She worshipped him for himself ; for his beauty, for his strength. He was her King Cophetua. His love had crowned her life. Often she thought of the words that had made heart-music for her before, and that would do so often and often again : —

"Sweet blows the wind — Ah, love! the night is sweet
Because thy fair dusk face looks down on me ;
Lover and lord and king ! low at thy feet
Were a meet place to be, —

Not on thy breast. O wonderful grave eyes!
That drew me all my days to this one day;
Lighting my feet to thy love's mysteries
Through moonless nights and gray.

I kiss these hands that brought to one forlorn
Thy strong love's frankincense and gold and myrrh,
Making her rich; and filled with oil and corn
The empty heart of her.

Love! I had thirst, and thou hast given to me
Thy life's red wine — cup for my full delight.
I am grown strong, and fair exceedingly,
In my beloved's sight.

Kiss me again, my king, and find me sweet.
We are alone beneath the mystic sky;
Hand pressed to hand, and heart-beat to heart-beat,
Together, thou and I."

It is a wonderful thing — the love of a good woman.

Insensibly all that was best in Katharine was unfolding itself beneath her husband's influence, as the flower buds expand beneath the warmth and light of the sun. She thanked

God. She was purely, transparently happy. There came no warning of the to-morrow. Poor Katharine.

Shortly after their return to Paris, Remington had met the contessa at a ball. He was passing, with a bow of recognition, when she spoke to him.

"You are too much of a stranger, Monsieur Remington," she had said: "when is it since we have talked together? See, I will be kind to you, and forgive past omissions. You must have plenty to tell me."

Paul smiled, as in duty bound.

"You are too good, contessa," he said ironically: "it is unfortunate that I cannot avail myself at the moment of your permission."

The contessa's eyes darkened ominously, but she preserved a smile.

"Then it must be *au revoir*," she said. "You remember your old promise to visit me, should you ever marry. I am at home to you to-morrow."

Remington's annoyance deepened. The al-

lusion to those days of hopeless infatuation for the woman whom he now despised was displeasing to him.

"As you will," he said coldly. Their eyes met. Remington felt that war had been declared between them.

"I have not been so fortunate as to meet madame, your wife," said the contessa with covert insolence; "and it is hard to know to which of you congratulations are due."

Paul bowed. He had no liking for a war of words with a woman. The contessa knew her advantage, but the opportunity to pursue it had vanished. Remington had silently withdrawn. His indifference had raised anew a very storm of hate and wounded vanity.

There was a good deal of the tigress in the woman, and to-morrow she would strike her prey.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Remington had accepted the invitation, one might perhaps say the command, of the contessa to come and see her, he had done so with an uneasy feeling that Katharine would not have been pleased. He had argued with himself that the thing was a promise of long standing, lightly made years before, — centuries ago, Paul thought retrospectively; and one of those bonds that youthful impulse puts on thoughtlessly, but which sometimes hang heavy in later life. Paul was nearly thirty, and the rashness of twenty years seemed inexplicable; but he was courteous to women, and had acquiesced quietly enough to the contessa's request. After all, what did the thing amount to? But the uneasy feeling remained, even when he had found himself in the contessa's dimly lighted, tastefully furnished *boudoir*, and

seated near the contessa herself, his once adored Léontine. Paul smiled a little grimly on seeing the carefully wrought artistic effects that had once been food and drink to him for many long hours of enraptured dreaming. The contessa was a beautiful woman, and knew how to heighten her beauty. She was dressed simply, even girlishly, and in the subdued light the result was pleasing. Her dark hair was held up loosely by a wrought silver comb, and her glorious eyes were singularly wistful. The contessa had not studied the art of expression for nothing. Paul began to feel and resent their influence almost unconsciously.

"You are late, *mon ami*," Léontine said, smiling a little reproachfully, holding out her hand as she spoke. Paul took it, held it for a moment, and relinquished it.

"I was never a model of virtue, you know," he answered carelessly; "and for punctuality least of all, contessa."

Léontine sighed.

"You are changed, Paul," she said quietly,

"and we have always been such good friends. Will you not tell me what troubles you?"

Remington smiled a little. The form of address was not new to him.

"I must be a bad actor," he said indifferently. "That impression is certainly the last I had in mind to give you. I can relieve your fears without scruple. I am both well and happy."

"*Voilà*, that is good news," Léontine answered brightly. Her manner had undergone an imperceptible change.

"How long is it since your marriage?" she asked.

Remington looked surprised.

"Surely you know," he answered. "I have been married now for nearly two months."

"So long! Do you know, I had almost a mind to send for you when I heard of the event, and to scold you a little. One does not like to hear of such things from strangers."

Paul moved impatiently.

"The whole thing was in one sense rather hurried," he said coldly.

"That is exactly what I thought. But Madame Desmond was beautiful; you had always good taste, Paul, and she will do credit to it. But you, with your stern English ideas, and she — Well, I often wonder if you will get on together.

"But your marriage so soon after that sad event, so soon after poor Rouget's death. But no one likes to stir up past and buried facts, least of all myself; so we will speak of the last new opera, of the coming grand ball, of the weather, of anything you wish, *mon ami*."

"I dislike your inferences," Paul said bluntly. "To what facts do you allude?"

The contessa laughed softly.

"Poor fellow," she said, "you were always so impetuous. I remember so well in the old days; but they were so long ago. Was it of the opera we were speaking?"

"You did me the honor to allude to my wife," Paul said sternly. "You will oblige me by withdrawing your innuendoes as to past facts, or explaining your meaning more clearly."

The contessa was amused.

"Still the same!" she said, laughing. "I have no wish to disturb the even tenor of your happy married life. Ask madame, if you wish, what she knows of Rouget, the artist; it would be instructive." Her tone was full of insolent meaning.

Remington looked at her quietly.

"One could hardly expect you to understand a woman like my wife," he said calmly.

The contessa was stung by his composure. Hitherto, she had kept herself well in hand; now, she let herself go unchecked. She laughed ironically.

"You are very calm, *mon ami*, but only because you do not believe me. If you believed me, you would be ready enough to kill me — only in that case you would hardly gratify your curiosity. Madame would not probably care to give you pain, while I — But that is the privilege of friendship." She changed her position slightly, and looked at him steadily.

"You are a foolish man, Paul Remington, and blind to what all the world already knows.

I am, of course, in your power, and quite defenceless, yet I do not hesitate to try and save you."

"What do you mean?" Remington said hoarsely. In spite of the woman's theatrical manner, he felt that she was now in earnest. The contessa leaned back again contentedly. She had fired the train. She could afford to wait. It was pleasant waiting ; she would not gratify him speedily.

"Only what I have told you, that your marriage was, to most people, a little unfeeling in its haste. Not that you were expected to act differently. But all Paris looked for madame to marry Rouget ; there was no doubt that she loved him, and encouraged him shamelessly. But it is, after all, an old story. Madame refuses Rouget, Rouget disappears — it is said he commits suicide ; he is poor and without position, you are rich and socially secure. Madame weighs these facts. It is, as I said, a very old story. Love and ambition. Who could blame you ? But to have the ceremony so soon after

the poor fellow's death. It jars on one. *Mon ami*, are you satisfied?"

"I know you," said Remington, in a low voice. "I know you well, Léontine; you do not deceive me."

The contessa shrugged her shoulders.

"As you will. The thing does not interest me. Have you heard the new *chanson*?"

And she began to hum a popular operatic air. Nevertheless she watched Paul closely. She hoped that she had done, after all, what she wanted. Only to disturb his trust in his wife. The rest was comparatively easy. She knew that he had raised Katharine above all women in his mind. If she could shatter his ideal in any one particular, it would be to strike a death-blow to his confidence in Katharine in all other matters. She knew what Paul was like. It must be all or nothing.

Remington was very quiet. The contessa's words burned like fire. The demon of suspicion was loose within him. The contessa was a bad woman, but what object could she have for

deceiving him? Had he, then, been so blind? or was the contessa lying? Had it all been a dream? Had Katharine really never loved him? He remembered now a thousand trifles light as air, but carrying a horrible conviction to his mind. But if there was truth to be had, he would drag it from her. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and forced her back on the couch where she was sitting.

"Give me proofs," he said in a low voice.

The contessa looked at the hard, stern face, and for the first time trembled. She turned deathly white underneath her rouge.

"You hurt me, Paul," she said faintly. He apparently did not hear her.

"Your proofs," he said again slowly.

"You shall have them." She covered her face with her hands, to shut out the sight of the ominous calmness of those brown eyes.

"Swear it?" said Paul.

"I swear it." Remington released his hold.

The color slowly came back into the contessa's face.

"How you frightened me," she said a little unsteadily. — "And to a woman. I did not believe that you could be so cruel." In the strangeness of the woman's nature, for the first time in her life, a sort of admiration for Paul came to her.

"Your proofs," Remington said again.

The contessa went to a desk and took out a small packet of letters.

"I thought it not unlikely that you would wish to see them," she said, her old nonchalant manner having well-nigh returned.

"These," touching, as she spoke, the packet, "these are letters from the artist. Rouget admired me; he likewise confided in me. I thought these might some time be useful, and so I kept them." The memory of Katharine's refusal to meet her came back with renewed force. "It was not well to make an enemy of me, madame," she thought scornfully.

"You will notice that Rouget speaks of your wife in the highest terms," she said aloud. "That in itself must be gratifying to a fond husband."

Remington was as one who does not hear. His eyes were fixed on the letters.

"See, here is the first," said the contessa, in her clear, musical voice. She took it and began to read.

"'I have but lately met *la très charmante Américaine, Madame Desmond*. She is an angel. She has given me permission to paint her portrait, and I commence to-morrow. You should know her, contessa ; you are both such beautiful women.' "

Paul looked at the writing, his face stern, almost stolid in its expression, — the face of a man suffering keenly, who, nevertheless, hides his suffering.

"And here again," said the contessa, smiling. "'I am *pris*, enraptured, carried away, — what you will, — with *la belle madame* ; and she is kind to me. I must tell some one of my happiness, and you, *ma très chère contessa*, have in so full a measure the gift of sympathy. I go to see madame by day, and I dream of her by night.' "

Remington drew his breath with difficulty.

"Charming, are they not, these notes?" said the contessa. "And written, some of them, during your own engagement. But you must, of course, allow for exaggeration. My poor Rouget was given to enthusiasms. Will you have more of this, or shall I go further?"

"Go on," Remington said with difficulty.

The contessa glanced rapidly back over the pages.

"Ah, here you come in," she said gayly. "'I told madame yesterday of my hopes and aspirations, and that I was of the people. She listened kindly. Sometimes, however, I think that I see a change in her manner. I cannot at all times understand why.'

"Ah, now you are spoken of, *mon ami*. 'There is an Englishman whom I see here sometimes. His name is Remington. A tall, dark sort of fellow, with apparently no gifts, no enthusiasms; in short, a detestable Englishman. Cold as an iceberg. Madame knew him *dans l'Amerique*. I cannot endure him.'

The contessa laughed again musically.

"Poor Rouget, you were always so positive!" she said. "But I will spare you his denunciations, and will come to his last letter. You will favor me kindly with your attention. Ah, here it is, —

"'I have spoken. It is all over. I am poor, and as yet unknown. I offered myself to madame. How can I tell you? The Englishman is rich, is secure, while I — It is horrible! I have cried with rage, with sorrow, with despair. You will never see me again. I could curse her, but I will not. My life is broken — is worthless. Farewell. — Rouget.'"

The contessa smoothed the paper mechanically. She was feeling decidedly pleased. Her success had been all but phenomenal. She had not hoped for the opening of such a royal road to revenge. With another man it might not perhaps have been possible. All this time her beautiful eyes were growing sad and sweet. She laid her soft white hand lightly on Remington's shoulder, but he shuddered and threw off the touch.

"My poor friend," the contessa murmured regretfully; "but think how it would have been if you had loved her. As it is, matters are much the same. She married you for social position; you, her, because she pleased your fancy and does credit to your taste."

Remington repeated the words mechanically. He looked like one awakening from a trance, or like one stunned by a sudden blow. With a laborious painstaking he tried to regain something of his former manner.

"I shall speak to Katharine," he said, rising, "to my wife. I have the honor to say adieu to you." He passed his hand over his forehead as if trying to remember something. "No doubt it can be explained."

The contessa watched him narrowly. Remington turned as he went to go out.

"Do you know, contessa," he said, "that it is dangerous to play with fire? You have come near knowing how dangerous to-day. Take care."

Léontine looked after him; as the heavy

portière fell back into place and hid him from sight, she laughed, but not mirthfully. She slipped her supple shoulder out of her gown. There were still the red marks where Paul's fingers had held her.

"It is not too great a price," she said to herself softly, and listened for the sound of his retreating steps.

"A fool in love," she said again, under her breath; and began to hum a new operatic air.

CHAPTER XVII.

REMINGTON did not go directly home.

His brain seemed on fire as he walked mechanically away from the contessa's apartments. The whole scene came back to him with horrible distinctness. It was like a nightmare: that false, smiling, beautiful creature, with the warm touch of her hands still upon him; the letters that made Katharine, his Katharine, as false as that, — that other one. He remembered how his wife had met him at the door of her room that morning, and stood watching him go down the stairs. Her face, her expression, her tall, graceful figure. It was all there, even to the folds and texture of her gown. It was of some soft, creamy stuff, he remembered, and clung to her figure. He had told her at the time that he liked it.

People that he knew were passing him; he

bowed to them almost unconsciously. And now it was all at an end. She could never be the same to him. She had married him through ambition, and had sent the other poor devil to perdition, with a smile. Those cruel, beautiful women. If it had not been for the accident of wealth and position it might have been him as well.

And his Katharine. He lingered over the words even in his thoughts. She had never been really his. The truth had been forced on him at last. All his friends knew it, the countess knew it, every one, and his Katharine above all. But she should have all the honor that was her due, she should enjoy to the utmost her newly found power; only this, she should know that he was her dupe no longer. She had sold herself, but love was not the price. She should have all honor, but his love she had trampled under foot.

A clock in a church above was silently striking. Remington was recalled to himself with a start. It was the hour when he had promised

to take her to drive. He had forgotten it, and she must be now waiting for him to come. She was to show him to the world, to the fashionable world, as the husband she had so skilfully blinded. His friends would laugh at him as the man whom another Delilah had bound in her toils. He had turned towards the Champs Elysées; their home — Katharine's and his -- was in sight. He had now only a feverish desire to see his wife, to confront her with his knowledge of the cause of Rouget's death, to see what she would do, to give her a chance of explanation. Perhaps it was all a mistake. His brain seemed on fire. He would know all soon.

He had walked rapidly; Katharine's maid met him at the door of his wife's room. "Madame had been waiting, madame feared that some accident had detained him. Should she announce him to madame?"

Remington smiled bitterly.

"I will relieve her fears myself," he said, entering the room. Katharine was standing

with her back towards him ; she turned around with a little exclamation of surprise and delight on seeing him.

"If you have come for a welcome, you don't deserve one," she said severely, but stopped as she saw the haggard, careworn look on his face. He had flung himself into a chair. The sight of his smiling, unsuspecting wife had unnerved him.

Katharine knelt down beside him, and laid her cheek against his hand. She was not given over-much to voluntary caresses. It was not her way, though she loved her husband with all the strength of an intense and passionate nature.

"What is it, Paul?" she asked gently.

Remington shuddered. Could anything so fair be so false as well? He made an effort to speak, and failed, then tried again. The words came coldly, unfeelingly. He drew away his hand slowly.

"Is it not about time that this farce should end?" he asked bitterly. "In public that sort

of thing is all very well ; — you shall have your due, do not be afraid, — but in private what is the use of it all ? ”

Katharine looked at him in a sort of dazed wonder. Then, as the full meaning of his words came to her, she stood erect. The hot, dark red color swept like a wave over her face and neck, a steady, painful stain. Remington went on mechanically repeating the words the contessa had used.

“ I know the truth at last : you married me for social position ; and I, you, because — because you do credit to my taste. ”

There was silence. Remington's heart sank. To the last he had held some hope that this monstrous thing was untrue, that she would deny it. Katharine did not speak. So this was the end of it all, — of her love, of her marriage. There was a sense of suffocation in her throat, but she scornfully battled with it. Oh, the paltriness of the excuse — and she had loved this man. God help her, had loved — she loved him still. That was the gall and

wormwood. And she had tried to comfort him, and he — The steady, painful flush grew a shade deeper. She drew the hem of her gown, with an inexpressibly graceful gesture, away from him.

"Can you not speak?" said Remington hoarsely.

Katharine laughed.

"You must pardon some slight surprise," she said scornfully. "I was learning my lesson. I will not forget again."

"Then it is true," Remington groaned in his anguish.

"We will not discuss your words," Katharine said. "You have played your *rôle* well. Now let all subterfuge be over between us." She raised her head proudly. "It is quite true. I married you through ambition; and you, me, because I do credit to your taste. Is not that it?" She turned slowly and left the room.

It was all over then. Paul, with that horrible realizing sense, was again alone.

"The cursed vanity of the woman," he thought. "And they were all alike: they would sell their very souls to gratify that passion. She encourages the artist, only to drive him to despair and suicide; she accepts me — makes me fancy that she loves me" — He broke off suddenly. "The utter wreck of my life has been this woman's work, and she can confess it without a tremor." He rose abruptly. After all, the contessa was right. He had been blind, inexpressibly blind, and Katharine, Katharine had done this thing. A dry, convulsive sob shook the strong man from head to foot.

"I am a fool," he thought, "and she is not worth it; — but my Katharine, my wife."

The contessa, serene and smiling, reviewing Remington's visit calmly in her mind, should have seen her work then. She would in all probability have been satisfied.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOMESTIC catastrophes, however important, cannot at all times set aside and make void all social obligation. That Katharine's happiness was shattered, her whole point of view changed, her hero fallen, could yet hardly allow her to withdraw from her engagement to attend the Zuliski ball. The invitation of a royal personage cannot with propriety be overlooked, especially when once accepted.

Katharine, indeed, had no thought of doing so. Her husband should not see how deeply he had hurt her. There is a feeling that wounded animals have which makes them want to creep away quietly out of sight and die under cover. If Katharine had that feeling she battled with it. But how fatally sweet those short two months of happiness had been. Not quite two months indeed. He might have

waited a little longer, left her to believe in honor, in manliness, in truth, for a little—if only a little—longer. She must have tired him strangely; he had married her without love, but knowingly.

The voluble French maid chattered and gossiped as usual.

“Madame must be tired to look so deathly white. A *souçon* of rouge now, only a touch. She would suggest it to madame.”

Katharine shook her head wearily.

“But monsieur,” persisted Thérèse. “He would be *anxiété, troublé* to see madame so pale.”

Katharine thought of her husband’s words; “I have married you to do credit to my taste.” Well, he must not be disappointed. People at least should still call her beautiful. She looked in the mirror. She was indeed deathly white.

“You had better do so,” she said gravely. “I must look well to-night.”

Paul came a little later to conduct her to the carriage. Katharine straight and tall; her

beautiful hair like a crown, that yet did not weigh down her small, well-poised head; her eyes that changed color so often, to-night dark, brilliant, fathomless. She met Remington with a carefully wrought smile. This was her first night of that awful, far-reaching future that stretched before her. She had made up her mind what she should do. Remington saw her, beautiful as ever, — saw the careless, smiling face. His heart hardened against her: she, then, did not suffer. He thought of the long, terrible hours of agony for him; and here she had been happily dressing for the prince's ball, planning new conquests. Katharine had never seen that expression on her husband's face before; but then she had never seen loathing struggling with love. He offered her his arm silently, and she laid the tips of her fingers upon it.

They had reached the carriage; Katharine sat looking out upon the brilliantly lighted boulevards. Remington, with that dull, hopeless anger against her that tortured him, was looking at her.

"I have something to say to you, Katharine," he said at last.

The tone of his voice was new to her. She turned haughtily.

"Will it not wait?" she said.

"No."

"Then you will oblige me by saying what you must say — quickly."

"God knows it is not too agreeable for me to have to tell you. I pass over in silence what you have done to me — what you have done to that poor devil, Rouget."

Katharine started as if stung.

"I am your wife — you can insult me as you choose; but it may simplify matters if I tell you that your elaborate excuses and reasons are unnecessary. I shall trouble you as little as possible. I understand your meaning clearly, only," and here her clear voice intensified her scornful gesture; "only try to remember that insult to me can hardly better your own position."

Remington looked at her.

"You are a capital actress," he said bitterly, "but you have always been that. I tell you, however, that I shall have no other life blighted by you." He sighed wearily. His anger could not last long when it was against his wife. He spoke more gently.

"We have both made a mistake," he said, "and perhaps I expected too much from you. If I have spoken harshly I beg you to forgive me. We must both bear our burden of life; let us make it as easy as possible."

She did not answer. How could this man speak to her like this, with the wrong he had done her before him, not two months old. And she loved him—loved him. The misery of it was killing her. Could she bear it to the end?

"Forgive me, Katharine," Remington said again.

"I shall never forgive you while I live," she answered steadily enough, though the words seemed to choke her. The carriage was stopping before the door of the Zuliski

hôtel. Remington offered her his hand with cold ceremony. She took it, and together they passed within.

"You will remember your position as my wife," Remington said. "If I seem to bore you, I do it for your own sake." The Marquis de Beauprès was watching them.

Katharine smiled brightly.

"Thanks, Paul," she said aloud, and in French. "You are very good to me."

Remington looked after her. His wife had become an enigma to him also.

The ball was, after all, a grand affair. Every one of importance was present, and Katharine had her circle of admirers, as was usual. Before that night Paul had always been pleased and proud of his wife's success; now it was hateful to him. He resented her power of attraction, he had an unreasoning desire to thrash the men on whom his wife smiled.

The contessa was there, of course. She saw his troubled, anxious face, and saw it darken as well when turned toward Katharine. Neither

did Katharine's brilliancy impose upon her. It was well done, certainly, almost too well done to be quite natural under the circumstances. She tapped Paul lightly on the arm with her fan, as she passed by him with an *attaché* of distinction. Remington looked moodily at her. The contessa laughed.

"There is safety in numbers, *mon ami*," she said softly, with a backward glance at Katharine.

Paul forced an answering smile.

Katharine saw the by-play and misunderstood it. She responded gayly to the somewhat laborious compliments of a future ambassador. She made use of new tones and new gestures. The Marquis de Beauprès watched her throughout the evening, and he, too, was puzzled. Remington came and stood near his wife. He had never been in the habit of leading conversation, and his silence to-night, if somewhat unusual, passed unnoticed.

Occasionally Katharine turned to him with some remark or question, and with a fine

imitation of her former manner. So fine that only the contessa and the marquis and Paul himself could fancy that it was an imitation.

For Katharine herself the excitement was at once a drug and a stimulant. She did not analyze her feelings, but she felt instinctively that she must talk, laugh, be gay; and all to keep the gnawing pain and heartache from claiming and dividing her attention. Then, Paul must think her happy. She knew that she was beautiful, and that beauty was a power; but she had never used the gift in precisely the same way before. There had always been in her, as in all women, a hidden fund of coquetry. Hitherto she had exercised it unwittingly, and with no fixed purpose. To-night there was a difference. Remington looked at her moodily. Had she really changed? or were the scales but just now fallen from his eyes?

He left the group that surrounded her, and wandered into the smoking-room. In one corner the contessa's husband, Count Caroni,

was talking politics, and the Marquis de Beauprès was listening with the half-amused, half-cynical smile that distinguished him. Remington stepped behind one of the hanging draperies that concealed a window, and looked out upon the boulevard beneath. His entrance had apparently been unnoticed.

"If you will substitute love of excitement for patriotism," the count was saying impressively, "I think you will have more correctly the principle of these petty revolutions. Only give the French people something to cheer for. The thing itself is immaterial; it is the cheering that is important."

"Or rather the reviling of that form of government that went before," said the marquis.

The count assented.

"I have often noticed with interest," he said, lighting a cigarette, and lazily watching the smoke curling upwards through the air, "I have often noticed that craving for excitement that to me characterizes the French people. You see it in the masses more directly,

perhaps, as I have said, in the way that they welcome any political movement; you see it in the men at the Bourse, gambling in stocks as in cards alike; and in the women — in them everywhere, in everything." The marquis again assented. Blundering old *diplomate* that he was, the Count Caroni undoubtedly had grounds for that last statement, and undeniable facts drawn from the companionship of his amiable wife. The other men in the group were talking together in an undertone. Caroni raised his voice a little.

"As for the Frenchwomen," he said dogmatically, "they live and breathe excitement in the very air. Now it is a rival to conquer, or a lover to bring back, or the forming of a *salon*, and the agitation of political questions, — nothing comes amiss; and the best of them have their religion skilfully administered as a tonic, with a love affair to add zest when religion grows dull. *Pouf!* but they are easy of comprehension — these women."

"And this new beauty, the present star on

the social horizon, what do you think of her?" asked the marquis.

"You mean *la belle Americaine*, Madame Remington. You are not fair; I speak only of the Frenchwomen. I confess, that, while I admire madame, she is still somewhat beyond me."

The undertone of conversation had ceased. There was a perceptible movement that spoke of interest among the men surrounding the count. The marquis was again the one to speak.

"Perhaps it will be a comfort to you to know that madame does not in the least understand herself," he said.

"And your authority?" questioned one of the group.

"Madame herself."

"So you are in favor?"

"You mistake me," the marquis answered complaisantly. "Not but what madame has been kind" —

"Kind to Rouget as well," said the count.

Remington clinched his hands tightly. Some of the men in the group were laughing coarsely. He had not noticed what they had been saying, but the last few words spoken of his wife had reached his ear. That Katharine's name should be bandied from mouth to mouth in this way, and in the common smoking-room!

"And her fortune?" some one was saying.

"Six millions of francs," said the marquis.
"I have it on good advice."

"Again her own?" asked the count.

Remington stepped out from the curtains. There was a movement of consternation among the men. The laugh at the count's sally had suddenly died away. Remington laid his hand on the marquis's arm.

"A word with you," he said quietly.

"A thousand, if you so wish," answered the other politely. He followed Paul into another room.

Remington spoke first with an effort. He began to realize on what slight grounds his quarrel rested.

"I dislike the tone which you use in speaking of my wife," he said.

The marquis looked surprised.

"A thousand pardons," he said. "I was innocent of offence. No one can revere and admire madame, your wife, more than myself."

"Your admiration is a thing she can very well do without," said Remington.

"Pardon, but it is a thing I cannot withdraw. Madame Remington has been kind enough to honor me with her friendship. It is only at her bidding that I can give back the gift."

"My wife will in all things be guided by me," said Remington.

"Undoubtedly," the marquis answered with a half-suppressed sneer. His tone was as a spark to gunpowder. Paul's face grew a shade whiter.

The marquis was still polite and smiling.

"You will consider your acquaintance with my wife as at an end," said Paul in a choked voice. He was conscious that he was making a fool of himself, but jealousy was mastering even that consciousness.

"As you will, but at madame's dismissal," said the marquis, and withdrew without waiting for an answer. Remington went in search of his wife. He found her in a retired corner talking with an *attaché*.

"It is time to make our adieux to the princess, and to go home," he said.

Katharine smiled. She detached a rosebud from her bouquet, and tossed it to the young *diplomate*. "A souvenir of the evening," she said to him as he caught it, and then accepted her husband's arm. Neither spoke till they reached the carriage. Paul handed her in formally.

"I have decided that your acquaintance with the Marquis de Beauprès had better come to an end," he said, without preamble.

Katharine looked at him a moment.

"And why?" she asked, with scornful, rising inflection.

"Because I do not approve of the acquaintance."

"Well?"

“And because he is not a fitting companion for my wife.”

“You will allow me to judge of that?”

“Certainly not.”

“You will give me a reason for your unreasonable suggestion?”

“I have already done so.”

Katharine laughed.

“It is almost unnecessary to say that I cannot comply with such a groundless request,” she said. “The marquis has always been kind to me and a friend. Through no fault of mine shall that friendship cease.”

She had already forgotten her former resolve; her husband’s suggestion had been unfortunate. Katharine was hurt deeply. Paul, then, had lost, with his love for her, his confidence in her. There was a reckless longing to end it all — the pain, the misery. Why should she be better than he thought her?

“You will obey me,” said Remington. Again Katharine laughed. They went the rest of the way in silence. Katharine, on reaching home,

went to her own room ; the strain was beginning to tell upon her. She locked the door with feverish eagerness ; the smile had faded from her face. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed convulsively.

“What an unhappy woman she was, and how Paul had changed.” But he was her husband, — no one could take that from her ; and how nobly he had looked, even in his unreasoning anger.

Paul heard the subdued sound of crying as he passed her door. He thought it was for the marquis, and the idea maddened him. He rang for his wife’s maid, and watched till Katharine, pale but composed, had opened the door to admit her. The sight of her beautiful face touched him in spite of himself. How he had loved that woman, and how ruthlessly she had wrecked his life, he thought ; and so the night wore on.

CHAPTER XIX.

THEY passed a miserable week together; Katharine outwardly indifferent, disdainful, apparently happy, inwardly with every nerve strung to its utmost tension, with the dull heartache and sense of loss for company; Paul, manlike, bearing the sorrow with a grim endurance, but feeling that something must be done, and soon, — the position was growing intolerable.

“Katharine,” Paul said suddenly one day, after a long lapse of silence that was frequent now between them. “Katharine, I have been thinking of all this. I cannot talk easily of it, of our mistake; but I want to do what I can to help you. I am going to leave you.”

Katharine’s face grew a shade whiter. She looked at her husband with an agony of mute appeal.

"Do not mistake me," Remington said quickly, "there will be no formal separation. You shall always have all honor as my wife, only I will trouble you as little as possible. You shall go to my estate in England, and I will travel on business. No one need know. I have settled half my property on you" — He stopped abruptly. "I have tried to consult your wishes in this particular."

Still Katharine was silent. She looked at Paul steadfastly, despairingly. All feeling seemed crushed out of her, now that she knew indeed that he did not love her, that he had said that he was going to leave her. There was no room for pride, — for the pride that had kept her up so long.

"Not that, Paul," she said, "not that. I will do anything" — There was an agony of despair in her voice. "Don't send me away."

"Do you mean that you do not wish this separation to take place?" Paul looked at her wonderingly, incredulously.

"Yes."

"You think, perhaps, that people will not understand your position," he said.

"Yes," said Katharine wearily, "think that if you must." She stood up. "Believe what good you can of me, Paul," she said. "I used to think once — long ago — that you loved me — a little. For the sake of that time, don't take away the shadow of what I once had, — leave me something from that past." She lost her self-control for a moment; the tears came in a great, overwhelming flood.

Katharine buried her face in her hands and cried convulsively. Every sob seemed to shake her from head to foot. Paul looked at her.

"What have I done, Katharine?" he asked desperately, "what have I done?"

She raised her eyes to his. She had regained something of her lost composure, but there was unutterable sadness in her face.

"You do not know," she said, "you do not know; but, Paul, you have broken my heart."

In another moment she had gone.

Remington stood looking after her. What

had his wife meant? Was it only good acting, as the contessa would have said? He put his hand to his forehead. Everything was dark. Heart-thinking is more wearisome than head-thinking. Paul felt like one upon a wreck, without rudder, without pilot, encompassed by a sea of dark waters, where no effort of his own could save him, and where he must drift helplessly; waiting indifferently, despairingly, for the end, for the working out of his fate. But the very atmosphere of the house was intolerable, he felt as if he were suffocating. The air, heavy with the fragrance of flowers, shut him in and stifled him. In another moment he had gone out among the throng on the boulevard, one man among many, one sorrow more among many, one mask more among the many — playing his part with the others in the short drama that men call life, covering up the shame and the anguish, bravely and well. What if it deceives nobody? Let us eat and drink and be merry, merry at all costs, for to-morrow we die.

Paul had hardly left the house when the

Marquis de Beauprès was announced. It might have been a coincidence, or it might, perhaps, have been as well a slight proof of the method that at most times was wont to characterize the noble Frenchman's madness.

Katharine received his message. He begged for only a few moments of her time. Should she excuse herself, or should she comply with his request? A feeling of utter loneliness came over her. Why should she not see him if he wished it? He could be an interesting companion for the moment, and she needed now badly enough something, some one outside her desolateness and her sorrow, to occupy her thoughts. But she mentally qualified her consent.

"Madame Remington will receive you," said the maid. But when Katharine came in, she looked at the marquis reproachfully.

"Why have you come?" she said.

The marquis had carefully prepared himself. With another woman he would have said, "Simply because I could not stay away," but with Katharine his manner was different.

"If you will allow me, I will tell you," he said. He was looking pale and worn. Katharine noticed it for the first time; she felt sorry for him.

"You must not think me inhospitable," she said more kindly, "but I believe that we had decided that, in as much as was possible, our acquaintance should cease. Was it not so?"

The marquis was silent.

"And this is not keeping your part of the contract, is it?"

"It is not, strictly speaking," said the marquis, "but I ventured to come to-day for that very reason. I mean that I feel that you have unintentionally misunderstood me. I look up to you, madame, as my guardian angel. I do not ask you to be so much merciful as just."

"I wish to be just," said Katharine. "But," with the slightest suspicion of a smile, "I have not the least desire or intention of playing the guardian angel. The *rôle*, believe me, is altogether beyond me."

"Nevertheless," said the marquis simply, "you are filling it at this and every other moment ; and when I ask you to be just, I ask you simply to be true to yourself. I am speaking seriously now, madame, when I say that you have influenced me for good in the past. Will you be doing rightly if you cease to do so altogether in the future ? and when you shut off all communication between us, — for the frivolities of the ballroom are all that you leave me, — that is exactly what you do. You are too serious a thinker to be able to throw off all responsibility. And it is not much that I ask. Only to see you, rarely if it must be, to ask your advice, to receive the help that even so slight a friendship can give me. You, and you only, madame, can do this. Do you refuse ?"

There was a ring of earnestness in his voice. Katharine felt troubled. Had she, perhaps, been too hasty in her judgment ? And, indeed, if she could, as he said, be of any help to him for good, make him any happier, it would be something. Still she hesitated.

"I do not know well what to say," she began, "or what answer to make you. If you are really serious" —

"Can you doubt me, madame? And if you do not know what answer to make me, I would willingly say let me decide that for you; but no, I will leave you to choose for yourself." He rose as he spoke. "And I feel sure that I am wise in trusting to your sense of right, and to your generosity." He stood silent for a moment. "I will trouble you no longer now," he said gently; "but when you think of how little I am asking — so little for you to give, so much for me to receive — I think that you will be just with me. You will permit me to come for your answer?"

He had gone before Katharine could reply. She felt disturbed, distressed, by his manner. She wished vaguely that the interview had not taken place. And must she decide? Was it right for her to treat the whole matter lightly? A week before she could have asked her husband: now the darkness was overshadowing

her. If she who could be so unhappy could yet give some little comfort to another, should she refuse? Her own sorrow made her pitiful.

The marquis had reasoned correctly. And so it happened that his next visit was one of many, and Katharine had said "Yes." So aptly can the angel of darkness take the form of the angel of light. The old, old story ever newly told.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE is a time in our lives when one seems to come to the end of everything, and now this feeling had come to Katharine. She was too serious a woman at heart to be satisfied with the frivolities of life ; she looked deeper and farther than the present. She knew the world well enough to understand its emptiness. Before, the problem had been answered. The reality of Paul's love had solved all difficulties, answered all questions. Katharine felt afraid. What would her great loneliness lead to ? She felt herself at the mercy of circumstances : she was growing daily morbid. She saw herself alone, an unloved, broken-hearted woman. Soon her beauty would leave her, age would come upon her, and meantime, with that pictured future before her, treading close upon her footsteps, was life

worth the living? It was a critical moment. Katharine felt herself punished heavily, but rightly, for her former sin. She had sold herself once—love for riches—now only riches were left her, and of love—nothing. It was then that the contessa had inadvertently changed the current of her thoughts, and unwittingly had shown her a new purpose for her life. Katharine, accompanied by her husband, had gone to a ball, and there each had played the usual *rôle*. Remington, moody and jealously watchful, and Katharine hiding her heart-ache with well-acted interest and affected brilliancy.

One of her partners had led her to a secluded part of the house near the ballroom, but cooler, quieter, and more restful. But it was already occupied. The contessa, reclining on one of the low, luxurious seats that were arranged in the room, looked up languidly as they entered; but her eyes falling upon Katharine, her manner changed. She rose slowly, and moved a little towards Katharine.

"This is certainly providential," she said, smiling and extending her hand. "I have a word to say to you, madame, and what better time than now? that is," she added, turning to Katharine's escort, "if Monsieur Larême will kindly accord me the privilege." The young fellow bowed and looked at Katharine.

"Madame Remington will excuse me for the moment?" he asked. Katharine had no wish for a *tête-à-tête* with the contessa, but there seemed no help for it. She assented indifferently, and in a moment the two women were alone. The contessa seated herself; Katharine remained standing. There was a moment's silence. Then the contessa spoke.

"You are perhaps surprised that I should take advantage of this encounter," she said, smiling, "but the opportunity seemed one not to be lost. I have long desired to know you better, madame, and this evening some subtle instinct tells me that the time has arrived." She closed her fan and leaned a little forward. "Your husband was a very good friend of

mine," she said slowly, "and it seems written that we two should be so."

Katharine remained silent. The mention of her husband by this woman had filled her with a strange, unreasoning anger.

The contessa waited for an instant, and then went on softly.

"I have seen you often, madame, and pitied you. I think that only one woman can know what another woman is suffering, and for weeks your secret has been no secret to me. I say that I have pitied you. It is the truth; it is the reason that I speak to-night."

"I think that there must be some mistake," said Katharine coldly. "I have no secret, and am in no need of pity." She had spoken calmly enough, but her heart was beating rapidly. She felt a strange, unwarrantable fear of this languid, graceful Frenchwoman, and yet something of the fascination that the bird feels for the snake. She tried to throw off its paralyzing influence. What was there to fear? She was here safe in a nineteenth cen-

tury; there was a ballroom near by, and dancing was going on there; only it seemed so long ago since she had left it, and this place so far away. Katharine summoned all her common sense. "I am growing nervous," she thought.

"Then you are at a loss to understand my meaning," said the contessa, "but the thing is very simple. I offer you my sympathy, and why? Because, being a woman, I feel for you; because I would be your friend, and because,—ah, my friend, the truth is always cruel,—because I, too, have seen what you already know, that your husband no longer loves you."

Katharine turned proudly.

"I think that you forget yourself," she said steadily. The quiet scorn of her tones was too much for the contessa's self-control. She dropped her mask on the moment, and the whole woman seemed transformed: her languorous grace of manner vanished; she stood erect, breathless, with all the hate and rage of her distorted and darkened soul in her eyes. She came a step closer to Katharine.

"You are very proud and very safe," she said under her breath, "but the truth hurts you, for all that."

Katharine stood silent ; she was very white, but calm, and there was a slightly contemptuous expression on her mouth. The contessa went on, in low, passionate tones.

"You are not like other women : you do not cry out, but the hurt is there ; I know it, and I am content. You are sick at heart, and he is tired of you. He — never — loved you, but he loved me. It is something to remember."

"It is not true," said Katharine.

"It is true, and you know it. For every kiss that he gave to you, he has given one to me. For every word of love that he ever spoke to you, he has spoken a hundred to me. And there has been a time, pale, proud, beautiful, as you are, when he but lived to see me, when my lightest breath was life or death to him. For he knows well how to love — your husband — though you will never know it."

Katharine gave a low, shuddering cry. She

put up her hands instinctively to shield her eyes from the sight of this woman's distorted and degraded beauty. It was horrible that there could be such a woman. But perhaps she had never known anything better; perhaps she had never had a chance, even a chance, for self-salvation.

The tears came to Katharine's eyes. She turned to the contessa with quiet dignity. "I am sorry for you," she said softly, "and perhaps you do not know what it is that you are saying."

The contessa gave a low, mirthless laugh.

"Keep your pity for yourself," she said scornfully, "it will be needed. I tell you now that I was once envious of you. I was mad with jealousy; but all that is changed. It is you now who must suffer—you who cannot console yourself with other loves. Go out now to your unloved life, where your beauty cannot help you, for he will not see it; where every hour will drag heavy as lead, heavy as your own weary heart."

Katharine put up her hand, as if to ward off the pitiless words ; each one worse than a blow. The contessa saw the gesture ;— its helplessness gave her a strange sort of satisfaction. She came a step nearer, and laid her hand on Katharine's arm.

"Go," she said under her breath, "go now, and remember that you are a blot upon his life, and a misery and a curse forever."

Katharine was trembling from head to foot.

"Do not touch me, do not dare to touch me. Do you think that I believe you? Oh, God help me! God help me!" She burst into passionate weeping, each sob wrung from her in an agony of despair. The contessa looked on, motionless, with a strange smile playing about the cruel, sensuous curves of her mouth. Presently Katharine raised her head.

"He is my husband," she said gaspingly, "my husband, mine. — You are a bad woman — but — you — cannot — take — away — that." Her own face, tear-stained, blurred, disfigured by grief, looked back at her from the mir-

ror. A great wave of self-pity broke over her soul.

"O you poor creature, you poor creature!" she said softly. "No one can comfort you — no one, no one."

A subtle change came over her.

"You think that you have hurt me," she said quickly. "You have — cured — me. I have been too proud. It is a punishment. You have shown me that nothing matters — only love. Pride is nothing — nothing." There was a moment's silence. Then Katharine went on calmly, quietly. There was not a vestige of her passionate, heart-wrung weeping.

"You have been pitiless enough," she said, "but you have been logical. Only I tell you now that you are wrong, quite wrong. And if Paul does not love me, he shall love me — yet."

The whole woman was transformed. She looked, with the glow of firelight on her upturned face, like some beautiful, inspired priestess of olden time. The contessa shrank palpably from the new radiance. "You are a

strange woman," she said, with grudging admiration ; "and, well, yes, you know how to love."

Katharine was alone. Every nerve was tingling ; she put her hand over her heart to steady its riotous beating. She felt now like a new woman. There was something, after all, to live for — to strive for. She threw herself on her knees. "Dear God, make me a better woman. Make him love me. I have not been good, but I will be better. I will try so hard. Oh, for Christ's dear sake, make him love me."

She got up — comforted.

Paul was waiting for her to take her to the carriage. In silence, and together, they passed out into the night.

The drive home was to Katharine, at least, a strange one. That last hour had made a great change in her. She saw the past in a new light. Like a woman, having once forgiven Paul, she assumed to herself all the blame of what had happened. It was she who had been rightly, justly punished. No wonder that Paul had grown tired of her with her caprices, her

vagaries, her constant inconsistencies. She remembered now with a pang how, when in Naples, he had wished her to stay at home one afternoon quietly with him, she had wilfully insisted on going instead out to drive. How patient he had been with her. She looked up at her husband with a strange new kind of timidity. His face looked white against the dark background of the carriage, and under the steel-blue of the electric light. His mouth was stern. It was a strong, beautiful face, one that a woman would love unstintedly, without limit. Katharine knew it in every line, and as a book, by heart. The very trick he had of lifting the eyebrows when in thought was familiar to her; and the hand, strong, muscular, long, finely-shaped. It had given her a sense of reserved power, when its clasp had ever so lightly been on her. It was lying now outside the carriage robe. If she laid her own — warm, tender, clinging, with the old familiar touch — upon it, would he care? She began with a feverish eagerness to undo her glove. Paul turned.

"Can I be of use to you?" he said, with cold formality. Katharine felt the tone as a knife which cut deeply. She had felt almost near him before, now she was again a thousand miles away. She shook her head silently. As Paul helped her to descend from the carriage, he spoke again.

"I am going away to-night," he said. "I shall probably return in a few days."

He looked at her intently. Katharine had grown very white.

"Where are you going?" she said breathlessly, "and why do you go now, — now of all times?" A lump rose in her throat; it suffocated, strangled her.

"Don't waste superfluous sentiment on me," said Paul bitterly; "and, Katharine, you do not deceive me; the street is hardly the place for tragedy, however well assumed."

She did not heed him. This last disappointment seemed greater to her now than all the others. He was going away, and she had meant to be so much to him — to be so good, so different.

Remington half led, half supported her to the house. She sank into a chair, and cried like a child convulsively, the sobs coming at intervals, catching her breath, suffocating her. Paul walked moodily up and down the room. He was convinced that it was all acting — good acting indeed.

“Katharine,” he said, stopping before her. “Katharine, don’t cry. I — I can’t stand it to see you cry.”

Katharine looked up, pale and miserable.

“Are you going, then, Paul? Will you leave me?”

“Yes,” said Paul desperately. He would not show her how she had yet power enough to move him. His inmost soul had been tortured all that night by jealousy. He would make sure now. He —

Katharine was watching him with bitter hopelessness in every line of posture.

“I shall be away some time,” Paul said with an effort. He looked at his wife. She was white, very white — she looked almost ill. He went out, and returned with a glass of wine.

"Drink that," he said authoritatively.

Katharine looked up appealingly.

"I could not, Paul," she said. "It — it would strangle me."

"Nonsense," said Remington, but not unkindly. He put his arm around her. She trembled violently. He could feel the pliant figure lean heavily against him. The touch was intoxication, a subtle fragrance as of late violets mounted to his brain, the very folds of her gown around him seemed alive. He battled desperately with the feeling. This was the woman that had deceived him, who was deceiving at that moment. He must remember that, always, everywhere. "Come," he said with the quiet of repressed passion. "Come, Katharine, I am waiting." She took the glass from his hand submissively, and drank the contents.

"Am I not a good girl?" she said, like a child waiting confidently for a word of praise.

"No," said Paul harshly. He turned away: the mute pleading of her wonderful eyes was

fast killing all manliness. Another moment and he would have been at her feet. He rang sharply for his wife's maid.

"Madame is to go to bed *at once*," he said sternly, "*at once*, remember."

"*Oui*, monsieur," said the girl, courtesying.

Remington went out into the darkness, and without looking back upon them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE Marquis de Beauprès appeared early the next afternoon at Katharine's apartment. There was a moment's by-play before he was admitted.

"Is madame at home?" The question was accompanied by the transfer of a coin of the realm from one hand to another.

"Ah, most assuredly."

"And — Monsieur Remington?"

"No, monsieur was away. Would not Monsieur le Marquis enter?"

"Presently. Was Monsieur Remington to be gone long?"

"Ah, who could tell? Two days, three — four."

Yes, the marquis would enter.

Katharine received him after a few minutes' waiting.

She was radiant. A telegram from Paul had reached her: "Home at seven-thirty." Only four hours and a half to wait. She had put on her prettiest gown, and had arranged and rearranged every article in the room. Now the first thing that she said to her visitor was, "Paul comes home to-night."

The marquis nodded gravely. He did not seem over-much pleased. Katharine was sorry that she had told him at all. She felt all the petulance of a spoiled child to whom sympathy is denied. She began to wish that the marquis had not come. If he were not here she could continue her preparations. She would air Paul's newspaper, and put it by his chair. He would notice that, and it would please him. It was what good wives in books always did. And then his slippers. She couldn't remember where they were. To think of a wife's not knowing where her husband's slippers were! But his cigars, she knew about those at least. He liked the left-hand package best. She would have those

ready, at any rate, and perhaps he would not notice then about the slippers. And after dinner he could sit and smoke, and she would be very quiet, so as not to disturb him. She would take up some embroidery. She hated embroidery, but Paul had said once that he liked women to be domestic. And then afterwards she would play to him very softly the things that he used to like. And above all she would be quiet, very quiet. Paul hated scenes, and perhaps that was the reason he had gone away. Now, when he came back, she would meet him at the door. She would act so naturally, just as she used to do long ago when he loved her a little — just as if nothing had happened.

The marquis shifted uneasily in his place. Katharine had, without knowing it, been gazing steadily at him with wide-open, meditative eyes. Now his motion had aroused her. She colored a little. She had forgotten his very existence until he himself, by moving, had recalled the fact. She made an effort to talk

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pleasantly, but she was all the time conscious of the effort; so, indeed, was the marquis. However, he roused himself and tried to entertain her. Katharine listened with forced attention, but again and again she found herself wondering where Paul was. Would he be on time? When would the marquis go? But even her random replies the marquis found bewitching, and that far off look in her face.

"You were saying?" — said Katharine, rousing herself with difficulty.

"That the pottery of which you spoke must be very beautiful. It is rare as well. I don't think that I ever saw quite such a piece as you describe. Have you it with you?"

"Yes. I will get it for you," said Katharine, rising. She was glad of the chance that he had given her to leave him for a moment. She thought that she remembered now having seen Paul's slippers.

But the marquis protested.

"Do not trouble yourself," he said quickly.
"And the jar must be tremendously heavy.

You could not possibly carry it." But Katharine had already gone. Her handkerchief, a flimsy web of cambric and lace, was lying on the floor.

Remington had entered unperceived just as his wife vanished. The sight of the marquis had stunned him for the instant. It was direct evidence to his distorted fancy of what he had before only suspected. At that instant, de Beauprès, unconscious of Paul's presence, picked up the handkerchief and pressed it to his lips.

"My adorable Katharine," he murmured in French, "how my heart worships you!"

Remington caught the exclamation. His face turned white with suppressed fury. He strode into the room. The marquis, with a half-uttered exclamation of surprise and dismay, recoiled.

The two men stood facing each other for an instant. The next, Remington lifted his hand and struck the marquis across the mouth.

"You dog!" he said under his breath, with the fearful quietness of intense rage.

The Marquis de Beauprès stood an instant as if turned to stone, his face livid, a dark red stain showing only where Paul's hand had left its mark. The next, a murderous light flashed into his eyes. But to kill the man who had struck him !

"You will meet me?" he said, speaking with difficulty.

"When you will."

There was a fierce, unholy joy in Remington's heart at the prospect of a duel. "He shall not love his adorable Katharine long," he thought savagely.

The marquis bowed with formal courtesy, and passed noiselessly out. When two men have but just arranged to kill each other, they can afford to be mutually, and for the time, polite.

Paul heard Katharine's step in the hall. She came in humming a soft little air, one that her husband liked. She was smiling; she had found Paul's slippers. She had been thinking so busily that her husband's presence had been unnoticed. Now she looked up.

"Paul!" she said breathlessly. To Remington it sounded like a cry of fear.

"The marquis," Katharine began, but the words died on her lips. The sight of Paul's face, distorted by passion, had frozen them at their very source. For a moment, she stood trembling with terror; the next, her old spirit came back to her. What had she done that her husband should look at her like this?

Remington was mad with jealousy. An overwhelming thought began to penetrate every nerve and fibre with fiery intensity. To take that white throat between his fingers, and crush out of existence her lying and deceitful life. Many men had done as much and for less cause.

Katharine looked at him proudly, fearlessly. She did not know it, but her pure, undaunted gaze was keeping at bay the devil that was raging within him. So they looked at each other, husband and wife.

Remington's blind rage slowly calmed.

"To kill her? No. He would do that for

her marquis to-morrow. She should taste of bitterness, as he had done — and live on. A low, mirthless laugh broke from his lips. He stood aside to let her pass out.

Katharine drew the hem of her gown away from all possible contact with him, with quiet dignity. She took a step forward, but a blindness came before her. There was a pain as of something tugging at her heartstrings. She put her hand there, with a helpless, childlike gesture. The next moment she swayed unsteadily, and would have fallen had not Remington caught her in his arms. Katharine lay there, white, unconscious. Paul felt a sickening fear seize him. The blue-veined lids had closed over her beautiful eyes; her face was so like death. He began with feverish eagerness to chafe her hand, which lay white and passive in his grasp.

“Katharine,” he said imploringly, “Katharine, Katharine.” For the moment she was to him as she had been before — his only — his wife. Then the disloyal suspicions came back,

— the strong man trembled like a child at their coming.

He kissed Katharine once, passionately, with lingering intensity.

“For the last time,” he said half aloud, as if in excuse for his weakness.

He was taking leave of the old life — the life of love, of belief, of trust, in this woman, his wife. Then with an effort he put her from him, gently but resolutely. He had yet another duty to perform, then all would indeed be over. He rang for Katharine’s maid. When she appeared, there was not a trace of his former passion.

“Madame Remington is ill,” he said coldly. “You will give her all necessary attention,” and passed out. But his manner did not deceive the astute Frenchwoman.

“These English — bah !” she thought, — “blocks of ice with hearts of fire. My poor madame, *que c’est triste*.”

Katharine opened her eyes. Their glance wandered restlessly over the room in search of her husband. He had gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAUL was brought home insensible. The shot from the pistol of the Marquis de Beauprès had shattered his right shoulder. The wound in itself was not mortal, but the flow of blood had left him dangerously weak. Everything, the doctor said, depended on perfect quiet and good nursing.

The physician, having seen to the comfort of his patient, went to inform Katharine of her husband's condition. She was in perfect ignorance of what had occurred, and greeted the stranger with all her usual grace of manner ; but a pitiable change came over her at his first words, —

“Madame, I am a physician ; I have only this instant left your husband ” —

She grew deathly white, and grasped convulsively the back of the chair by which she was

standing. The doctor thought she would have fallen.

"Paul," she said, her breath coming in quick, short gasps, "he — is ill?"

"He has been wounded in a duel. — Madame, I beg of you, compose yourself. Allow me to procure you a glass of wine."

"Where — is — he?"

"In good hands, here at home. His life depends on careful nursing, and on perfect quiet. No excitement. It would be fatal to him."

"I must go to him. Take me to him. At once! Do you hear — Ah, how can you keep me? Let me go to him."

"Madame, be calm. It is impossible. The least thing might effect a change for the worse."

Katharine regained her self-control by a supreme effort. She held out her hand, at once imperious and appealing.

"Feel," she said, "I do not tremble. — See, I am calm. I will not disturb him. Oh, mon-

sieur, for God's sake — Surely a wife's place is by her husband."

A servant entered the room and spoke to the doctor.

"Your husband has regained consciousness, and is asking for you," the doctor said, after a moment's hesitation. "Will you bear in mind the fatal consequence if you are not calm? Can I trust you to go to him?"

"I will remember," Katharine said quietly. She followed him to the room where her husband lay. The doctor touched her arm warningly, and allowed her to enter. The light had been almost excluded, and in the twilight of the sick-room Katharine saw her husband, white and still, lying on a couch. The covering had been pulled up and hid the shattered shoulder. With his free hand Paul motioned her to come nearer. Katharine knelt beside him. She fixed her eyes upon her husband's face. She was only conscious of him; everything else seemed far away. She only knew that Paul had been nearly lost to her.

Remington had never loved and hated Katharine so intensely. She had never seemed half so beautiful, or half so diabolical in her beauty, as now. Through his distorted fancy came back a host of recollections, trifling in themselves, yet which held the power to sting him to the quick. Yet in spite of herself he had saved her. And the whole truth, did she yet know it? His breath came hard and fast. His hand closed over Katharine's, but with no lover-like clasp. Indeed, he was crushing the slender fingers in his own with unconscious intensity. He summoned all his strength. The words came slowly, with difficulty. He motioned her to bend nearer.

"I — have — killed — your marquis."

He waited for the change that he felt must come on his wife's face, but none was there.

"You are hurt, Paul," she said. She was dimly conscious that she was sorry that there had been a quarrel, and that the marquis had been shot; but it all seemed so dreamlike in the face of her husband's danger.

Remington was stupefied. He had hoped to wring some expression of her anguish from her, but perhaps the blow had numbed her.

"Why did you not ask for him — for — your marquis?" he said.

"I had forgotten him," Katharine answered simply.

Paul turned his face away from her, and groaned; his fingers relaxed their hold on hers. She must be, then, altogether without heart.

"You are suffering, Paul?" she asked gently. She went softly to his side and raised a glass of wine to his lips with infinite tenderness. She had long ago forgiven him everything.

"Leave me," Paul said with an effort.

Katharine turned to go. There was a sense of suffocation in her throat, her hand went there with an uncertain gesture. Why was it that of all men her husband should so hate her? Had she always been mistaken in thinking that he loved her? Surely in the old days he had loved her — a little. But she would not ask for love, only the right to serve him, to care for him. She turned again timidly.

"Paul," she said again, beseeching, childlike, "may I not stay with you? Don't send me away."

"Your host of admirers,—you forget them. You seem to forget, also, that I am but your husband—the claim is hardly to be considered."

"And you will let me stay?"

"Is it not rather late to pose as the dutiful wife?" Paul asked bitterly.

The color came in a warm, rich stain to Katharine's face. She rose with a certain proud humility.

"You will forgive me for disturbing you," she said; the unbidden tears came to her eyes. She turned to go, then came back. She looked at her husband appealingly, with something of the mute entreaty of a dumb thing that has been hurt and yet asks for further mercy.

"You will send for me, Paul, if you should want me?"

"And you will come?"

"I will come."

He smiled ironically.

"The *rôle* is becoming," he said, "and you do it rather cleverly."

The insult told. Katharine turned and looked at him with something of her old manner, but her face softened again. Her lips quivered.

"You are unjust, unjust to me," she said, in a low voice.

Remington did not answer. When he looked up again, Katharine had gone. Paul lay, still, with white, set face on the pillow. Against his will, his heart was changing a little towards her. A great yearning to see her came over him; she was so young and so beautiful, and perhaps he had been too hard.

For a moment the rush of memory overpowered him. Again they were together in the meadow near the little French village, he and Katharine alone; again he felt her little, warm, trembling hands; again saw the upturned, trustful face,—then darkness. Something was between them; he was trying to reach her, to save her—from what?

Presently he came to himself; the doctor was standing near him.

"I have good news for you, monsieur," he said to Remington. "The Marquis de Beauprès is not, as was at first thought, wounded fatally. He may recover."

A rush of passion distorted Paul's face. He raised himself by a supreme effort.

"She must have known it," he gasped, "that — was — the — reason. She could — afford to — smile." He leaned back exhausted.

The doctor only understood that his patient was exciting himself, and that excitement would result disastrously.

Remington regained his self-control.

"How long — for me to get well?"

The doctor comprehended.

"I cannot yet say definitely. It will depend on yourself."

"If the marquis were not such a scoundrel — I could die more easily."

"You will not die," said the doctor soothingly. "And the marquis will leave France."

"These English were strange people," he thought within himself. "Here was a man who had borne, without flinching, the dressing of a very painful wound — he, a doctor, could only know how painful — and now, since a few words with his wife, seemed totally broken down. Ah, but they were a people, indeed, hard of comprehension."

"If you will follow my directions," he said aloud, "you will soon be well."

Paul turned with sudden fire.

"I *will* get well," he said, with dogged determination. "It is not as you think — a question of choice" — There was a pause, then Paul spoke again. "And this matter — You are silent?"

The doctor answered gravely in the affirmative. Paul was careful still to shield Katharine's good name.

"I think that is all."

The doctor turned to go. He had reached the door when Paul called him back. There was a strange smile on Remington's face. He spoke with some difficulty.

"My wife — must not — tire — herself, — you understand, — with nursing."

The doctor bowed. The words had been kind enough, but the expression and the tone somehow jarred upon him. He went thoughtfully out.

At that moment, Katharine, with something of the movement of a caged lioness, was walking desperately up and down her room. The motion somehow helped her. To sit still, alone, clear-eyed, and face her sorrow, would be to go mad. She tried hard to think of other things. There was the gown that she was to have worn that night. Was it blue or gray? Which color had Paul liked best? But now Paul was dying. Dying! had any one spoken? No, he should not die. She repeated it again and again. He will get well — he will not die.

She went down on her knees.

"O God! don't let him die. Oh, my heart, the pain there — it hurts me — it hurts — don't let him die — don't, don't, don't." — She broke off into hysterical laughter, followed by low,

shuddering weeping. Everything was quiet, not a sound, save the ticking of the clock, to break the stillness. She began to count monotonously "One — two — one — two — one, two." Now it was saying something else, "He does not love you, he does not love you." She rose unsteadily to her feet. Paul had sent her away; she remembered it all now. But at night when he was asleep she would go to him — she would watch with him; and by day she would watch too, but away from him.

She went to the mirror and hastily took the hairpins out from her beautiful hair. It came down, a red-gold shower, hanging below her waist, framing her face like an aureole of glory. She caught it up hastily, and bound it in tight braids around her head. Then with feverish haste she slipped off her gown, and put on one of simple gray stuff, that somehow, liking it for its quaint simplicity, she had kept. She took off the jewels that she wore around her neck and the rings from her fingers, and slipped them into her pocket. Now that the change

was completed she looked like some beautiful, repentant woman transformed into a sister of charity, and made half angel by the transformation.

With another quick glance at the mirror, Katharine went out of the room.

"I am come to take care of my husband," she said to the doctor, "but," with a strange sort of hesitation, "at night only — I — at other times I am also, of course, at your service; but perhaps just at first, during the day he might not wish — might not like to have me with him."

"Exactly," said the doctor with quick courtesy. "Sick people have often strange fancies, madame."

She could not trust herself to speak, but bowed her head gratefully; and the doctor from that moment and without further knowledge, became champion of her cause.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THERE was many and many a weary vigil after that, when Katharine kept her watch. In the darkened room, with her changed dress and pale, quiet face, Paul would have found difficulty, even had he been well, in knowing her as the same woman whom he had seen, brilliant, *insouciant*, happy, and now with the delirium of fever upon him it was impossible.

Nevertheless, the touch of the hands of the night nurse had a strange power over him. He would have liked to hear her voice ; but she seldom spoke, and then only in a whisper. He had held her hand firmly in his once when she had been by his bedside, and had been surprised to feel how it trembled.

"Wait," he had said, "don't go. You remind me strangely of — of some one I once knew and — and loved." He was thinking of Katharine.

rine, although Katharine, he reflected, was in all probability enjoying herself, and without one thought for him — her husband.

“Then you love her no longer,” said the night nurse with a strange break in her voice. Paul sighed wearily.

“It doesn’t matter now,” he said.

But the watching and anxiety were telling on Katharine’s health. She had changed greatly. Again and again, after Paul’s illness had somewhat abated, had the doctor made up his mind to tell Remington that his wife was wearing herself out in his service; but when he had spoken of it to Katharine, she had begged him with such real pain not to do so, that the power of her mingled beauty and entreaty had always conquered.

And Paul? He was like a man dying of thirst with water within his reach, and yet held back by a fearful power from quenching it at the spring. He was longing with an intense, horrible longing for news of Katharine, but he would not ask. He was alternately morbidly

anxious not to interfere, even by idle question, with the liberty that he fancied his illness gave her; and, again, he was afraid of the answer the question might bring.

He resented her obedience to his wishes. He wanted her with a mad yearning, but he would not lift a finger to have her come to him; and Katharine — Katharine waited and hoped for some sign that he would want her, waited and hoped, and vainly. The nights' watching and the weariness of the longing to be openly with him had told upon her. There were dark circles under the luminous eyes. Her mouth drooped pathetically at the corners — the color had gone and had left her face white and still. She seldom laughed now; she had the look of one to whom the noise and brightness of life were indeed gone afar off, and to whom remained only the silence and pain of unutterable loss.

The duel was still a mystery to her, as was also her husband's anger. That Paul was jealous would have in any other case been inevitably forced upon her, but she could not

believe it true. Surely her husband must know how she loved him. Had not her very love grown tiresome to him? It was all dark—dark. The misery of endless days and nights was upon her. To be so near him, and yet so far from him. She had not been a bad woman; she had not deserved the bitterness of punishment like this.

It was then that the Marquis de Beauprès came for the last time to see her. He looked weak and ill. Katharine felt sorry for him; but to him she had undergone a wonderful change. He started back when she came in. She was so white—so almost saintly—so wondrously lovely, but in so different a way. He had come to make her what reparation he could. He began at once.

“I have come, madame, to say good-bye. You—you have been very good to me. I am sorry all this has happened. I—I am glad that my bullet failed to kill your husband.” She shrank back a little; she had forgotten. This man, then, had tried to take Paul’s life.

The gesture cut the marquis like a knife, but he went on manfully.

"There is something wrong between you," he said, not curiously, but a little sad. "I am sorry for that—now. I wish that I might put matters straight for you—before I go away—for I am going"—his voice broke. Still Katharine did not answer.

"You will forgive me for my part in this?" he asked.

"Yes," said Katharine slowly. Then she looked at him steadily. "How did you come to quarrel?" she asked.

"*You* do not know?" said the marquis quickly. "*You*"—he stopped abruptly.

"Then it was about me," said Katharine. She seemed to have altogether forgotten his presence. Gradually a light was breaking in upon her. If there had been then a reason for her husband's coldness, perhaps when he knew—when he saw how much she loved him—he would feel differently toward her.

The marquis rose.

"I must go," he said, "I leave Paris to-morrow. I—I shall never see you again"—his voice broke. "Good-bye," he said, after a moment's pause.

"Good-bye," Katharine answered gently. The marquis raised her hands to his lips. In another moment he had gone. Katharine turned slowly, and retraced her steps.

Remington was on a fair way to recovery when the doctor at last mentioned his wife to him. Paul listened eagerly, but with a pitiful attempt at indifference. The doctor's words proved hardly those which he had expected to hear of her.

"You should not allow Madame Remington to make herself ill with watching," he said; "you must know that she sits up night after night, and takes little rest by day. She has changed very much for the worse since your unfortunate accident."

"Katharine?" Paul said incredulously.

The doctor was annoyed at what he deemed the selfish impassivity of his patient. Katha-

rine's mournful eyes and white, hushed face haunted him.

"Yes, Madame Remington," he said sharply; "and in my opinion her health is in far more danger than your own."

A dry, convulsive sob shook Paul from head to foot. Slowly the new conviction was forced upon him.

"She has been watching — watching by me?" he said slowly. "My God! What have I done? Let me go to her." He rose unsteadily to his feet. He was still very weak.

The physician interposed.

"You are exciting yourself without cause," he said dryly: "a day more of neglect added to the weeks of it which she has already endured will hardly kill her."

The sudden change in Remington's manner puzzled him. He did not altogether believe in it.

Paul apparently did not hear him. He made his way with some difficulty across the room. It was pathetic to see the childlike helplessness

of the once strong man. In a moment he had reached the door and had passed out. He went instinctively, with uncertain steps, to Katharine's room. The door was partly opened. Paul entered reverently. Katharine was lying on a couch, asleep. She was breathing softly, regularly. Remington saw, with a sick pang of anguish, the imprint of those wearing weeks upon her face. Her head was thrown a little back. He noticed, half unconsciously, how still was the face, how the white lids veiled the eyes, how the long lashes shadowed the cheek. The little, moist, loose tendrils of hair that clustered round her forehead were stirred gently by every breath of air. She had an old habit of lying with her head on her arm—she was so now: her other hand hung by her side. There had been a very tumult of remorse, of doubt, of agonized fear, in his heart before; but the sight of her face had stilled the storm. He was only conscious of his great love for this woman, his wife, of a great unworthiness in his possession

of her. Katharine stirred under that passionate, sorrowful gaze, and opened her eyes.

"Paul," she said softly. A great gladness fell like a queen's mantle upon her; it was the royalty of happiness. She was almost afraid to move lest she should break the spell. It had been so long since her husband had looked at her—like this.

"Can you ever forgive me, Katharine?" Paul said unsteadily. "Can you ever forgive me?"

She put both her arms around his neck with an inexpressibly loving gesture. There was no need for explanations.

"I have nothing to forgive," she said gently. "Only love me a little, Paul. I am so tired. I have been waiting so long—for this."

"I will love you all my life long," Remington said solemnly.

There was a moment's silence. Presently Katharine sighed.

"I had almost forgotten what it was to have

a husband," she said, half smiling, half sad. Remington caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

"You shall never forget again," he said gravely, "never again."

Katharine looked at him, and with very great content.

"This is my true wooing, Paul," she said softly.





